

# AT HOME

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See HomeTown Life Inside

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## Sunflowers

Plants bloom tall, wide for these contest winners

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Hannah and Reva Berman probably enjoy gardening as much as their parents. From broccoli to zucchini, they enjoy growing several varieties of vegetables with parents Lisa and Gary at their home in Farmington Hills. "Last year we put (the vegetables) out on a stand and people bought them," said Reva, 13.

That enjoyment of gardening also transcends to sunflowers as the Bermans grow the tallest sunflower and won the High Hopes Sunflower Contest sponsored by the Observer Newspapers and English Gardens. First-place winners will receive a \$75 gift certificate, second place gets a \$50 certificate and third-place winners receive a \$25 certificate.

For the Bermans, "sunflowers are a passion," said Lisa. Even at their former residence in Farmington Hills before they moved two years ago, "we were always known as the house with the sunflowers," she said.

Straddling along the side of the house sit two large sunflowers, one measures 12 feet 10 inches, another 12 feet, 8 1/2 inches. They sit between tomato and pepper plants on a slight slope which makes measuring them a real challenge for husband Gary and the sunflower contest judge.

Hannah, 10, planted the sunflowers in May. "We watered and watched it," she says. The sisters help with the garden care and the 13 sunflowers.

They believe the sunflower was the skyscraper variety of seeds Gary bought in Seattle on a business trip. Gary also prepped the garden soil with compost and cow manure and a small amount of lawn fertilizer.

They fertilized once with Miracle-Gro, which was used by several Observer contestants.

### Second tallest

The yard of the Hlady home in Canton features 16 sunflowers, and all of them are of good size, with one reaching the skies at 12-feet, 9-inches, stacked up and taller than the eave of a house. "It really had a bond in it," said Denise Hlady, mother of 16-year-old Niki, who entered the contest.

Not only did Niki's entry place second in height, it also placed second in the size of the seed head category at 17 1/4 inches.

You might say the sunflowers "went bananas" when they grew, and for good reason.

"We used banana peels for potassium," said Niki. "A secret recipe," her father, Kerry, chimes in.

The seeds were obtained from a sunflower grown two years ago. This year's plant won a contest sponsored by their subdivision.

When Niki talks about her sunflowers, her friends doubt that the sunflower has attained such height. "So when they stop by, they see it," Niki said.

She expects to save the seeds for next year. "And we'll grow it even taller," she said. The Hlady also grow tomatoes, radishes, cucumbers, onions and green peppers.

"It's been fun watching them grow," said Niki.

### Third place

Eric O'Neill, 6, of Farmington Hills, son of Julia and Patrick O'Neill, planted a sunflower behind the O'Neill home. It topped out at a height of 11-feet, 9-inches, nourished with only water and sun, said Julia. "We enjoy watching the birds like the gold finches" said Julia. "The birds eat the seeds at this time of year."

Her husband ordered the sunflower seeds from a Henry Fields catalog. The sunflowers are good conversation starters and they plan to save some seeds for neighbors.

Daughter Anna, 2, enjoys the sunflowers, too. "She likes to show them to people," said Julia.

### Largest seed head

Kayla Jakel's winning plant for seed head size sprouted from a seed from last year's plant, a third-place winner last year in the same category. That plant was started by Kayla with seeds from a neighbor.

The plant is located in the same area - behind the garage and in a sunny part of the yard of the Jakel's home in Garden City. Mom Paula said they fertilized the plant once with Schultz's plant food.

"The neighbors can't believe how large it is," said Paula.

The garden also features pumpkins, tomatoes and cucumbers. "We have cukes every night," Paula said. "I like to pick and eat them," adds 5-year-old Kayla.

Last year's seed head broke off the sunflower plant, so the Jakels improvised this year. "We had it staked," Paula said. "When it rained, we thought it was going to fall off, but it stayed up."

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STAFF PHOTO BY BILL TREKLES

Wow! Reva Berman, 13, and her 10-year-old sister, Hannah, stand beneath their 12-foot, 10-inch sunflower that grew on the side of their Farmington Hills home. They won first-place for the tallest sunflower in the High Hopes Sunflower Contest.



PHOTO BY MARTY FIGLEY

Winning entry: Kayla Jakel, 5, of Garden City, holds the edge of her plant's flower, which contained the largest seed head, measuring 19 inches, in the High Hopes Sunflower Contest.



PHOTO BY MARTY FIGLEY

Standing tall: Julia O'Neill holds daughter Anna in front of a group of sunflowers in the backyard of the O'Neill home in Farmington Hills. The O'Neill's third-place winner is in the center of the photo. Ed Orzel of Westland poses next to his third-place winner in the seed head category.



PHOTO BY MARTY FIGLEY



STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL HUNCEMANN

Blooming: Niki Hlady, 16, of Canton, stands in front of her 12-foot, 9-inch entry, which took second place. Hlady also took second place for a 17 1/4" seed head on another plant.

JOE GAGNON

### Clean dishwasher

Use this breakfast drink to clean the parts inside your dishwasher.

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MARTY FIGLEY

### Check out flowers

When you take a trip, be sure to stop and smell the tulips and other flowers.

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HOMETOWN LIFE:

### Monster mash:

Editor Joni Hubred was transformed into a zombie by Longacre House instructor Jeff Ferreri. See why.

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