

Everyday Healthy! Everyday Delicious!

From the Kitchen of Janice Feuer Haugen

Paul's Step-by-Step Sunflower Sprouting Guide

How to easily grown your own crisp, flavorful Sunflower Sprouts any time of year. The ultimate locally grown food.

Pre-Sprouting

Sunflower seeds must be soaked to soften their shell and begin the germination process.

1. Put 2 cups of sunflower seeds in a wide mouth quart mason jar topped with a screen lid. Fill the jar with 60-70 degree water. Whole sunflower seeds tend to float. Therefore keep the water level right up to the screen lid.
2. Soak the seeds for 8-12 hours.
3. Drain off the soak water. This contains nutrients and can be used for watering plants. Rinse the seeds thoroughly with 60-70 degree water. Drain off all the water.
4. Lay the jar on its side where it will not be disturbed. Preferably out of direct sunlight and at room temperature. Normal kitchen light is okay.
5. Rinse and drain again in 8-12 hours and then again in another 8-12 hours. The rinse and drain cycle continues until most of the seeds have sprouted, showing just a hint of a root. It's now time to plant.

Planting and Growing

1. A plastic nursery tray with holes—the “planting tray”—is placed inside a tray without holes known as the “drip tray.”
2. Add about 7 cups vermiculite to the planting tray to form a ½-inch deep bed.
3. Prepare a quart of kelp-enriched water following the directions on the kelp container. The 7 cups of vermiculite will hold approximately a quart of enriched water. You don't want more than a little water in the drip tray. Pour off any water that remains above the ridges of the drip tray.
4. Spread the sprouted sunflower seeds evenly on the thoroughly moistened vermiculite.
5. Cover the planting tray with the other nursery tray with holes. This keeps the light out and moisture in while allowing for air circulation.
6. Place the trays in a low-light room. Seventy degrees is optimal. Sunflower sprouts also grow well in both cooler and slightly warmer temperatures.
7. Use your quart spray bottle to spray the seeds twice a day. Be sure to keep the seeds moist so they set their roots into the vermiculite. Later, when the sunflower sprouts are in the direct sun, your goal becomes keeping the vermiculite moist.

Greening your sunflower sprouts

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1. After 3-4 days, the sunflower sprouts begin to show leaves.
2. Once most of the sprouts begin growing leaves, move the sprouts to a well-lit location to receive direct sunlight.
3. To water the sprouts, place the kelp water into the drip tray. The vermiculite will absorb the water directly from the bottom drip tray.
4. Begin with 2 cups kelp water in the drip tray. Lift the planting tray to see how much water is left after 4, 8, and 12 hours. If the tray is dry add more water. If there is still water 24 hours later, then cut back the next time you water. Just leave as much water as the sprouts can drink in a day. Too much water can drown the plants and/or lead to fungal or mold problems.
5. Another watering option is to continue watering the sprouts from the top.
6. Paul's sunflower sprouts sit in front of a southern exposure window. Currently, the cold coming through the window has slowed down their growth.

Harvesting, washing and storing

1. Use a pair of scissors to cut the sunflower sprouts just above the vermiculite when they are about 2-4 inches tall. For the best flavor, harvest sunflower sprouts just as their "true leaves" begin to appear from the center of their first two leaves.
2. Most of the sunflower sprouts shed their shells as their leaves open. However some shells remain stubbornly attached. Carefully peel off those shells.
3. Gently rinse the sprouts in a strainer. Enjoy them immediately or dry them and store in a plastic bag with a paper towel in the refrigerator for 3-5 days.

