

Peredovik Sunflower

Peredovik is a Russian cultivar of black sunflower originally bred as a sunflower oil crop.

The seeds are of a medium size and deep black. Tests have shown that the black sunflower seeds contain more oil, calories and fat than the striped varieties. Besides being an excellent crop to grow for oil production, it is also fantastic for game cover use, for biomass, the seeds as a feed source for wildlife and for drawing in pollinators. This variety has a softer husk than other varieties available, so even small birds can crack the seeds open to reach the very nutritious centres. The smaller black sunflower seeds are also favoured by wildlife due to the more palatable seed size as opposed to the larger striped seed. Peredovik is also used for forage; whilst the plants are still young before the stems become woody and is relished by deer.

The giant flower head is made up of two separate parts. The inside disc is really a cluster of flowers, whilst the larger yellow coloured 'petals' on the outside are actually protective leaves. Peredovik sunflowers can grow up to 5-6 feet high and although it is still a large plant, it is not classed as a large variety. It takes around 100 - 110 days for seed to mature on the plants from germination, depending on growing conditions.

Sunflower seeds help to produce healthy feather development for birds and the birds will use the natural oil from the seeds to spread on their plumage when preening to help waterproof their feathers and keep out the cold. Sunflowers are very site adaptive and will grow in almost any soil. They can be planted in rows or broadcast sown, no deeper than an inch underground.

Sunflowers are ideal to grow alongside vegetable and fruit crops as the flowers will attract lots of bees and other pollinators which will then increase the yield of the cash crop by pollinating more flowers than what would be otherwise. Also, the birds that are also drawn in will help to keep the pest levels down. Sunflowers of any type are an important plant to help keep the bee population stable as preserving the UK's bees is becoming a priority issue both currently and for the future.