

# ■ SUNFLOWER OF LADAKH

*Helianthus annuus* L.



**Scientific Name:** *Helianthus annuus* L.

**Common Name:** Sunflower

**Local Names:** Kanglanyishar, Nima Gur

**Family:** Asteraceae

**Genus:** *Helianthus*

**Growth Form:** Annual herb

**Flower Colour:** Bright yellow with a dark brown central disc

## Description

Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) is a tall annual herb cultivated for its attractive flowers and oil-rich seeds. It can be grown successfully in suitable sunny and irrigated areas of Ladakh. The plant has a strong, erect stem and large, rough, broadly ovate to heart-shaped leaves arranged alternately. The characteristic flower head is a **capitulum**, consisting of numerous tiny disc florets surrounded by bright yellow ray florets. The central disc contains the fertile flowers and develops into a head containing numerous seeds.

## Uses

- **Edible seeds:** Used as a nutritious food and snack.
- **Edible oil:** Seeds are an important source of sunflower oil.
- **Animal feed:** Seeds and other plant parts can be used as livestock feed.
- **Pollinator support:** Flowers attract bees and other pollinating insects.
- **Ornamental value:** Widely grown in gardens and school campuses.
- **Educational value:** Useful for studying capitulum structure, pollination and seed formation in Asteraceae.

## Importance in Ladakh

Sunflower is an attractive addition to school botanical gardens and demonstration gardens in Ladakh where adequate sunlight and irrigation are available. It provides students with an opportunity to study plant morphology, pollination, seed formation and an important oilseed crop.