**Helianthus annuus ʻSonjaʼ**

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**Introduction**

Sunflower is a short-lived annual with large, striking flowers (Fig. 1). Large types grow to 12 feet tall, but many garden cultivars are 4 to 5 feet tall. The familiar flowers have yellowish petals with a brown central disc, and grow to 6 to 12 inches across. Plants are seeded in late winter to early spring in Florida, produce lovely flowers in mid-spring and decline quickly in the heat by late spring to early-summer. Plants in Florida installed in the fall can produce a nice flower display for several weeks in the fall.

**General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Helianthus annuus* ʻSonjaʼ  
**Pronunciation:** heel-ee-ANTH-us AN-yoo-us  
**Common name(s):** ʻSonjaʼ Sunflower  
**Family:** Compositae  
**Plant type:** annual  
**USDA hardiness zones:** all zones (Fig. 2)  
**Planting month for zone 7:** Apr; May  
**Planting month for zone 8:** Mar; Apr  
**Planting month for zone 9:** Feb; Mar  
**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** Dec; Jan; Feb  
**Origin:** native to North America  
**Uses:** specimen; accent; mass planting  
**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

**Description**

**Height:** 2 to 6 feet

**Foliage**

**Spread:** 1 to 2 feet  
**Plant habit:** upright  
**Plant density:** open  
**Growth rate:** fast  
**Texture:** coarse
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** dentate  
**Leaf shape:** ovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** not applicable  
**Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** not applicable  
**Fall characteristic:** not applicable

**Trunk and Branches**  
**Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable  
**Current year stem/twig color:** green  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** very thick

**Culture**  
**Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown  
**Plant spacing:** 18 to 24 inches

**Other**  
**Roots:** not applicable  
**Winter interest:** not applicable  
**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** may self-seed each year  
**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

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Use and Management

The cultivar ‘Valentine’ has good uniformity and flowers well in Florida. It has a better overall appearance than either ‘Floristan’ or ‘Hallo’. ‘Floristan’ has mahogany and light-yellow bicolored flowers; ‘Hallo’ has bright golden flowers; ‘Valentine’ has lemon-yellow flowers. ‘Sonja’ has big, yellow-orange flowers.

Pests and Diseases

‘Valentine’ is host to heavy infestations of Sweetpotato whitefly. ‘Big Smile’ had no infestation in trials conducted in central Florida.

Leaf spots can cause severe leaf necrosis.