

Preparing Sunflower Seeds From Garden to Table and Garden to Garden

University of Idaho
Extension
Kootenai County
1250 W Ironwood, Ste 107
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

Phone: (208) 292-2525
Plant Clinic: (208) 292-1377
E-mail: kootenaimg@uidaho.edu
Web: uidaho.edu/kootenai



Sunflower seeds are commonly harvested in late September after all the yellow leaves have fallen away and the head has begun to droop with weight. The sunflower seed preparation process reduces the moisture content inside the seed hulls to intensify the flavor and solidify the texture of the kernel. Control the seasoning levels and flavor of sunflower seeds by preparing them yourself. Only prepare seeds from flowers that have not come in contact with pesticides, insecticides or other chemical products used in the garden or landscape.

Step 1

Wrap a piece of cheesecloth around the head of the sunflower and secure it with string tied around the stem to keep birds away from the seeds as they ripen in the garden.

Step 2

Cut the stem 12 inches below the cheesecloth-wrapped head to remove the flower after the petals have wilted and half of them have fallen off the flower. Look for black seeds with white stripes, indicating they are ripe.

Step 3

Tie a second piece of string around the bottom of the stem to suspend the sunflower with the head pointing toward the ground. Leave in a cool, dry place until the seeds dry completely and fall into the cheesecloth (usually 1-3 weeks). Gently shake the sunflower to dislodge any loose seeds. Keep these in an airtight container until ready to roast. If using the seeds for next season in the garden: Keep cool and dry in a breathable container. Store seeds in a dark place with decent airflow.

Roast the Sunflower Seeds

Step 1

For salt-added: Combine the sunflower seeds with water and salt and soak overnight.

Step 2

Drain the seeds and pat dry on paper towels.

Step 3

Heat the oven to 250 degrees F and spread the soaked and dried seeds onto a baking pan in a single layer.

Step 4

Roast the sunflower seeds for 60-90 minutes or until golden. Let cool before serving.

Step 5

Toss the sunflower seeds with salt or other seasonings to taste while still hot if you desire. Stir to coat and let cool on paper towels before serving.

The University of Idaho, Kootenai County and its employees are providing suggestions only. We are not responsible for injury or harm that result from these suggestions.