

Common sunflower *Helianthus annus L.*

Family: Asteraceae (Composite family)

Life cycle: Annual

Habitat: Crop fields, disturbed areas

General description: Erect plant up to 14 ft tall with coarse stems. Lower leaves heart-shaped, upper ovate to lanceolate; margins toothed to entire. Numerous 'sunflower' heads produced up to 6" wide.

Key ID traits: Rough stems and leaves, leaves heart-shaped, triangular or lanceolate with long petioles.

Similar species: Common cocklebur seedling resemble those of common sunflower, but sunflower has small ovate cotyledons.

Miscellaneous: Common sunflower is a native plant; there are numerous *Helianthus* species found in prairies, but *Helianthus annus* is the only one with weedy tendencies. When sunflower was added to the noxious weed list, a Kansas legislator jokingly proposed opening a hunting season for the goldfinch (common sunflower is the Kansas state flower, the goldfinch is Iowa's state bird).



Seedling with cotyledons



Agronomy 217



Weed Identification