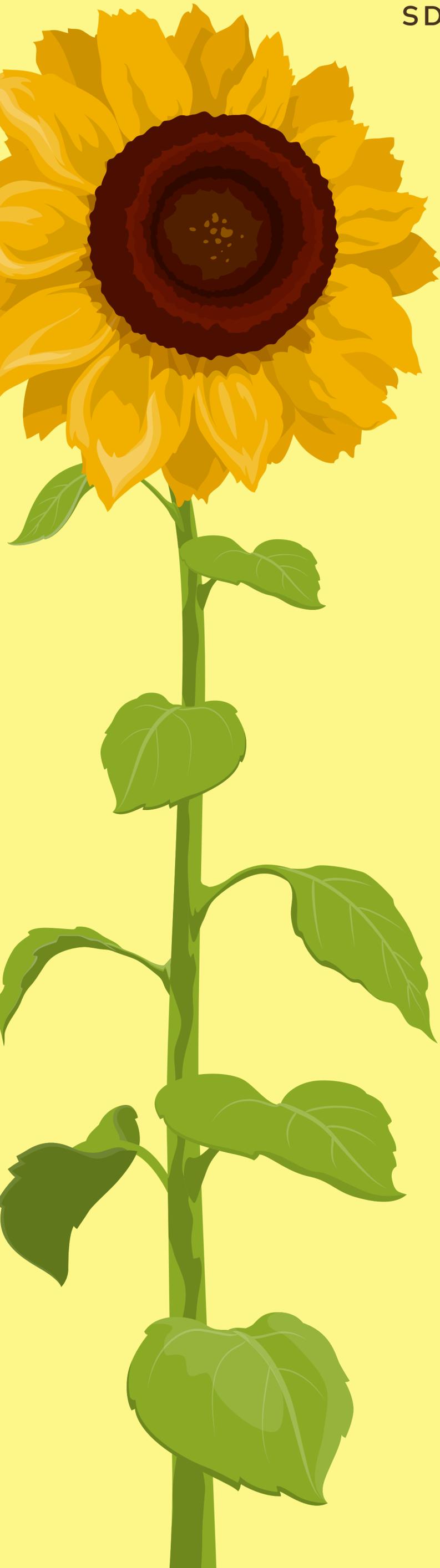




SUNFLOWER FACTS

From the wonderful Science Kids website at: www.sciencekids.co.nz



- The sunflower is a large *inflorescence*, this means the flower head is actually made of many tiny flowers called florets. Central florets look like the centre of a normal flower while the outer florets look like yellow petals and together they make up a "false flower".
- This natural design helps insects and birds to easily see the sunflower and after pollination every little flower or floret produces a seed.
- The stem of a sunflower can grow up to 3 m (10 ft) tall and the flower head can be 30 cm (11.8 in) wide.
- Sunflowers are very fast growing plants, in the right conditions they can grow 8-12 feet (2.4 m - 3.7 m) tall in six months.
- As of 2012, the Guinness World Record for the tallest sunflower is 8.23 m (27 ft) for a sunflower grown in Germany.
- There are two kinds of sunflower seeds. Sunflower oil which is used in cooking and in margarines is made from black seeds and snack food is made from the striped seeds. The seeds can also be used as bird feed.
- The sunflower is native to the Americas and was used extensively by Native Americans for food, as oil, in bread, medical ointments, dyes and body paints.
- Sunflowers can be used to extract toxins such as lead, arsenic and uranium from contaminated soil. For example, sunflowers were used to remove toxins from the environment after the Fukushima nuclear disaster.
- It is a misconception that flowering sunflower heads track the Sun across the sky during the day. Young flower buds do display movement similar to this behaviour through a process called *heliotropism*. But a mature flower usually points in a fixed easterly direction.