

Sunflowers

In a field filled with brilliant sunflowers, there is something astonishing. All the plants face the shining sun. At the start of each day, sunflowers turn their heads to the east, then move westward as the day proceeds, swinging back to the east during the night. Even if you tie a sunflower so it can't move or plant it in a pot and rotate it daily to make it confused, you can't disrupt its ability to face the sun. What a miracle!

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Scientists have suggested that there are two growth mechanisms at work in sunflower stems. The first establishes a base growth rate for the plants based on the accessible light. The second mechanism, which controls the circadian rhythm and is affected by the direction of light, causes the stem to grow faster on one side than the other, making the flower move progressively from east to west.

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However, once a sunflower matures, its growth slows, it stops moving during the day, and it only points east. It responds more strongly to the light of the morning than that of the evening and gradually stops moving westward during the day.

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How do sunflowers turn to face the sun?

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What direction do they face in the morning?

Why do they stop turning?