This early North American sunflower was bred in Europe by Peter the Great in some time around 1716.

Sunflower became very popular as a ornamental in the 1700s, and it was the result it grew so much the drive.

The (wild) sunflower is native to North America but domesticated versions of the plant took place in Russia.

By the late 19th century Russian farmers were growing over 2 million acres of sunflower.

By the late 19th century, Russian sunflower seed figure/life seep into the US.

Van Gogh's paintings of Sunflowers are big hits in the art world. Van Gogh painted them in Arles, a city in south of France, 1889 and 1888.

American Indian (Jim Sunflower was a common crop among American Indian tribes and was used for food and medicine. Sunflower seeds are commonly used in Native American cuisine in Arizona and New Mexico, about 2000 BC. Archaeological evidence of sunflower has been recovered from Native sites.

The Russian Orthodox Church increased its popularity by forbidding consumption of meat, dairy, and other foods during Lent. Sunflower oil was allowed on the prohibited list and became a staple food, inevitable popularity as a food.

Canada started the first ever government sunflower breeding program in 1930.

By 1946, Canadian farmers built a small crushing plant processing sunflowers in Minnedosa and North Dakota.

A likely source of this seed movement to North America may have been Russian immigrants.

Acreage increased in the US with increased interest in the production of sunflower oil.

Back to Europe
U.S. acreage escalated in the late 70's to over 5 million because of strong European demand for sunflower oil.

anselm kiefer, Sunflowers (Tournesols, 1996)

painted in the south of france

The native North American sunflower plant has finally come back home after a very circuitous route. It is the Native Americans and the Russians who completed the early plant genetics and the North Americans who put the finishing touches on it in the form of hybridization. Those early ancestors would quickly recognize their contributions to today's commercial sunflower if they were here.

Dahlias and Sunflower, Sir Jacob Epstein, c.1936

painted at Baldwin's Hill in Epping Forest in Essex

Pic 1: Pre-Hispanic sunflower motifs: ceramic spindle whorls from Xaltocan (top); stamp from Azcapotzalco (bottom left); Mexico stone sculpture (bottom right) (Click on image to enlarge)

Flowers as banquet gifts (notice the sunflower in the centre), Florentine Codex Book 9 (Click on image to enlarge)

Pic 9: The sunflower features as a symbolic gift to the Spanish by the Tlaxcaltecans; Diego Durán 'Historia de las Indias....' (Click on image to enlarge)

Sunflowers originate in the Americas. They were first domesticated in what is now Mexico and the Southern United States

Diego Rivera

Gustav Klimt

Gustav Klimt 1907 - Famr Garden with Sunflowers

Gustav Klimt (July 14, 1862 – February 6, 1918) was an Austrian symbolist painter and one of the most prominent members of the Vienna Secession movement. Klimt is noted for his paintings, murals, sketches, and other objet d'art.