

'Aztec' Maximilian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani* Schrader)

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Maximilian sunflower, *Helianthus maximiliani*, is a native perennial forb that grows in most soil types in areas that receive 18 inches of rainfall or more each year. Plants have one to several stems that range in height from three to nine feet tall. The leaves measure six to eleven inches in length and are alternate, lanceolate, and acuminate. Maximilian sunflower produces large yellow flowers that begin blooming in the summer time and continue into the fall of the year. 'Aztec' Maximilian sunflower is a composite plant release from the James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center in Knox City, TX. The five collections came from Throckmorton, Mitchell, Hamilton, Blanco, and Bandera Counties in Texas.

Maximilian sunflower has many benefits as a conservation plant. The numerous flowers attract a wide variety of pollinators, such as bees, wasps, flies, butterflies, and pollen-eating beetles. The plant also serves as a larval host plant for silvery checkerspot and border patch butterflies. At the James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center, monarch butterflies are commonly found when Maximilian sunflower is blooming.

Another recent benefit is that Maximilian sunflower has the potential to be used in biofuel production. This is contributed to its wide adaptability and high biomass yields.

Maximilian sunflower also provides food for deer, game birds, songbirds, and many other wildlife species. The foliage is highly palatable and eaten by all classes of livestock. The dense foliage provides excellent cover for wildlife as well.



Maximilian sunflower USDA-NRCS



Maximilian Sunflower Field USDA-NRCS



Plant Bug on Maximilian Sunflower
USDA-NRCS

The full newsletter can be found at the following website:

<http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/bio/docs/reverchon%20naturalist%20V2%202011.pdf>

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