Wild Yellow Sunflowers in the Nilgiris

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Why in News?

Wild sunflowers were reported in full bloom along roadsides in the Nilgiris in November 2026, particularly on routes connecting Udhagamandalam with Eppanadu and Kallatti.

- **Location** – Reported along roadsides in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu, including the Ooty–Eppanadu and Ooty–Kallatti routes.
- **Seasonal flowering** – The report describes a seasonal mass bloom of wild sunflowers; the Nilgiris also experiences flowering of wild dahlias, everlasting flowers, cherry blossoms and jacaranda at different times.



Wild Sunflower

- **Scientific Name** – Helianthus annuus.
- The wild sunflower is a branching annual plant native to North America and the wild ancestor of cultivated sunflowers.
- **Family** – Belongs to the Asteraceae (also called Compositae), commonly known as the aster/sunflower family.
- **Habitat** – It thrives in full sun and well-drained soils, commonly growing along roadsides, field edges, and open ground.
- **Appearance** – Unlike domesticated varieties bred for a single giant head, wild plants grow multiple branches with numerous smaller, 2-to-5-inch yellow blooms.

- **Growth** – It reaches roughly 2 to 10 feet tall with rough, hairy stems and leaves.
- **Blooms** – Produces many daisy-like flower heads with yellow rays and dark centres.
- **Inflorescence** – A sunflower "head" is a capitulum: numerous small florets are arranged on a common receptacle.
- Outer ray florets are showy; central disc florets are generally fertile.
- **Pollination & movement** – Young sunflower buds show heliotropism (tracking the Sun); mature flower heads generally remain east-facing. Insect pollinators, including bees, visit the flower heads.
- **Phytoremediation** – Sunflower has been studied for its capacity to take up certain contaminants, including heavy metals, from soil; this is a plant-based remediation approach.
- **Ecological Role & Uses** – It supports bees, butterflies, and birds that feed on its nectar and seeds.
- It offers drought tolerance and disease resistance for breeding programs, though it can act as a weed in crop fields.

Reference

[The Hindu | Wild Yellow Flowers in the Nilgiris]

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