

## Attracting Hummingbirds



Hummingbird gardening involves the planting of hummingbird attracting plants. It is just that simple! Hummingbirds consume 1-1/2 to 3 times their own weight in food per day. Their diet includes flower nectar, spiders, and small insects. Because hummingbirds rely on insects as a source of protein, chemical insecticides should not be used in the hummingbird garden. Not only will insecticides kill insects which are essential to a hummer's diet, but they could sicken or kill the hummingbird that eats insects or flower nectar that is tainted with insecticides.

The Ruby-throated hummingbird is the variety that visits this each summer. Most of the species of hummingbirds are found west of the Rockies, and the Ruby-throated hummingbird is the only one found coast to coast in the United States. As unbelievable as it may seem, they spend their winters in Mexico and Central America. And we aren't even its farthest summer home. Some even migrate hundreds of miles into Canada. Each fall, they migrate south and follow the same route back the next year, often to the exact same yard. Only the male Ruby-throated hummingbird has the bright red throat. Both are iridescent green on their back and heads and have a white underside. They average below 4 inches in length. They build tiny nests and rear 2 or 3 young each year.

Hummingbirds are amazing creatures that have developed the ability to extract nectar from deep-throated flowers with their long, thin bills while hovering in mid-air. Hovering requires a tremendous amount of energy, so they are very active feeders. Their primary food is nectar from flowers. In early spring, before the flowers are blooming, they often drink sap from tree wounds created by woodpeckers. Hummingbirds supplement the sugars from nectar and sap with insects for protein.

### **Plants for Hummingbirds**

The best way to attract them to your garden is to include several plants with tubular flowers that bloom over a long period of time. At first, they will be drawn to your garden by bright colors (red and orange) but once there, they will check out all the flowers, no matter what color. Included in this information sheet are lists of the different types of plants that attract hummingbirds. Fuchsias are great because they are one of their favorites and they bloom for months. A hanging basket of fuchsia can be added to almost any garden space, including the balcony of an apartment. Baskets or containers of lantanas also attract hummingbirds in areas where it might be too hot for fuchsias to perform. You do not have to sacrifice garden design by trying to include all these plants, just select a few that will work in with your plan. In addition to a source of nectar, hummingbirds will need trees and shrubs for shelter and nesting.

## Supplemental Feeding

Natural sources of food should be supplemented by feeders. Hummingbird feeders are designed to provide a sugar-water solution. Hang them in a shady area that is open enough that the tiny birds won't fall prey to cats. Be sure to keep the feeders clean. It is essential to clean them frequently, because in warm air the sweet liquid can quickly allow growth of molds and bacteria that may kill the hummingbirds. Syrup can be made from commercial mixes or by combining 4 parts water and 1 part sugar (do not use honey). Heat the mixture to dissolve the sugar, cool before using and keep any extra syrup in the refrigerator until it is needed. It is important to consistently provide this supplemental food for your visiting hummingbirds. It is very difficult to keep enough plants blooming to provide their nectar needs all summer.

## Plants That Attract Hummingbirds

### Annuals

Snapdragons  
Spider Flower *Cleome*  
Impatiens *Impatiens*  
Four O'Clock *Mirabilis*  
Flowering Tobacco *Nicotiana*  
Fuchsia  
Geranium *Pelargonium*  
Lantana  
Petunia *Petunia*  
Nasturtium  
Pentas  
Scarlet Sage *Salvia splendens*  
Salvia coccinea  
Verbena *Verbena*  
Zinnia *Zinnia*

### Perennials

Hollyhocks *Althea*  
Bearberry *Arctostaphylos*  
Columbine *Aquilegia*  
Butterfly Weed *Asclepias tuberosa*  
Delphinium *Delphinium*  
Bleeding Heart *Dicentra*  
Foxglove *Digitalis*  
Gentian *Gentiana*  
Daylilies *Hemerocallis*  
Coral Bells *Heuchera*  
Hibiscus *Hibiscus moscheutos*  
Varieties of Hosta *Hosta*  
Gayfeather *Liatris*  
Cardinal Flower *Lobelia cardinalis*  
Bee Balm *Monarda*

Beardstongue *Penstemon*  
Sweet William *Phlox stolonifera*  
Summer Phlox *Phlox maculata*  
Evening Primrose *Oenothera*  
Garden Phlox *Phlox paniculata*

### **Trees and Shrubs**

Horse Chestnut *Aesculus h.*  
Buckeye *Aesculus glabra*  
Catalpa *Catalpa*  
Redbud *Cercis canadensis*  
Hawthorne *Crataegus*  
Crabapples and Apples *Malus*  
Locust *Robinia*  
Butterfly Bush *Buddleia davidii*  
Currant *Ribes odoratum*  
Azalea *Rhododendron* spp.  
Rhododendron *Rhododendron* spp.  
Gooseberry *Ribes speciosum*  
Lilacs *Syringia*  
Weigela *Weigela*

### **Vines**

Trumpet Creeper *Campsis radicans*  
Morning Glory *Ipomoea*  
Honeysuckle *Lonicera*  
Scarlet Runner Bean *Phaseolus cocc.*  
Cypress Vine *Quamoclit*

\

**Links**            <http://www.hummingbirdsociety.org>  
                      <http://www.rubythroat.org>  
                      <http://hummingbirdwebsite.com>