

ATTRACTING HUMMINGBIRDS

Ruby-throated hummingbirds migrate through our area each spring and fall. Few stay and nest. In the spring birds are in a hurry to reach their nesting areas and few will take the time to linger at feeders or gardens. However the fall migration is more leisurely paced with migrants present from August to early October. Up to 500 ruby-throated hummingbirds have been seen in a single day during the peak of autumn migration from the Hawk Tower at Holiday Beach C.A. Fall migrants can easily be enticed to visit your backyard, by providing nectar in the form of feeders and flowering plants. Late August through September is the best time to attract hummingbirds.



Feeders should be hung in partial shade and filled with a solution made from one part table sugar and four parts water. Do not use honey, artificial sweeteners or icing sugar. Food colouring is not needed as most feeders have bright red parts. Try hanging two or more feeders in your yard as a hummingbird will spend much of their time chasing other birds away from a single feeder. Moulds are quickly attracted to sugar so clean your feeder every week or when the solution becomes cloudy.

Fill feeders with only one or two inches of solution until they are discovered. Many feeders are equipped with bee guards to prevent honeybees and yellowjackets from reaching the solution. Ants can be denied access by using special ant guards.

Native flowers such as Spotted Touch-me-not, Cardinal Flower and Wild Columbine are heavily visited by hummingbirds. Garden plantings should provide a variety of nectar sources for migrants as well as summer residents. In the spring, apples, cherries and other fruit trees, wild columbine and trumpet honeysuckle are choice nectar sources.

Many plants depend on hummingbirds for pollination. These species typically have red, tubular shaped flowers and produce large quantities of nectar. Bee-balm, coral bells, firebird penstemon, tropical sage, society garlic, canna lily, scarlet trumpet vine and honeysuckle vine produce flowers in mid-summer. By mid to late summer these plants can be supplemented with annuals such as touch-me-not, nicotiana, cardinal vine, and the tall late blooming varieties of scarlet sage.



Cardinal flower

Hanging baskets are a great way to encourage hummingbirds. The very best to use is a red, tubular flowered variety of fuschia called “Gartenmeister Bonstead”. Mexican cigar-plant is another species which can be used this way. Although brilliant in colour most geraniums produce no nectar and should be avoided.