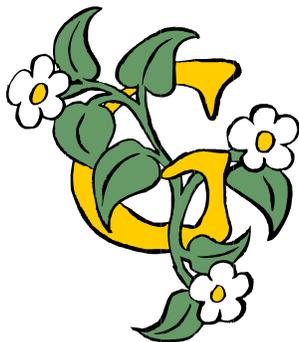




**ummingbird**

**and**

**B**utterfly



**ardening**

With just a little planning any yard and garden can draw in hummingbirds. All they need is food, water and a place to rest. Then sit back and watch the action!

### **Pick the Right Plants**

Hummingbirds are quite fussy about flower color and shapes, so make sure you select ones they like. Hummers favor red and pink blooms, simply because they see these colors best.

For flower shape, tubular blooms are best. Hummingbirds easily reach the nectar deep inside these blooms with their beaks.



There are exceptions however! Begonias are great hummingbird plants, yet the blooms are not tubular. And they are often seen feeding from ginger lily blooms, which are white.

When just starting out, stick with red or pink flowering plants that hummingbirds are known to feed from. Once hummers are established visitors, add favored plants in other colors (like white and purple impatiens).

### **Use Plants Correctly**

Although the entire yard need not be devoted to these tiny birds, there are a few basics to go by.

First, plan to use mostly perennials and annuals. Trees and shrubs bloom for such a short time that they're best used as supplements to your main hummingbird plants.

Second, use the plants 'en masse'. A large grouping of pink coral bells does more to attract hummers than a single plant will.

Third, aim for a garden where something is always blooming. Plan to use annuals that flower continuously, select perennials with varying peak bloom times, or do both.

What if your landscape is already complete or space is at a premium? There are easy ways to adapt an already existing landscape.

For example, use bedding plants known to attract hummingbirds instead of the varieties or colors you usually use. Or, incorporate hummingbird plants into your pots and hanging baskets.

### **Get a Little Help**

Initially, you may need help attracting hummers, so hang a few feeders. To keep bees away, avoid any feeders with yellow parts (bees are highly attracted to yellow). Tie on a few red ribbons to the feeder to really get the bird's attention, fill and hang.

### **Add Some Water**

Provide the birds with fresh water for drinking and bathing; a shallow birdbath works well. Add rocks to your current birdbath if it is too deep.

### **Somewhere to Rest**

Finally, give the little birds somewhere to rest, be it a nearby tree or shrub. Then sit back yourself and enjoy the show.

## Planning A Hummingbird Garden

# Simple ways to create a garden that's irresistible to these tiny birds

## Bill Thompson III

With their lively chirp, stunning agility, and brilliant colors, hummingbirds have captured our imaginations as no other flyers have. Best of all, most every gardener in North America can expect to play host to at least one hummingbird from late March through September. Because these birds typically feed three to five times per hour, they are easy to attract with flowering plants or strategically placed feeders.

Found only in the Americas, the hummingbird family includes 383 species, but only 16 live in North America. These light-weight, relatively small, and high-metabolism birds feed on insects and flower nectar. They are among the most acrobatic of fliers; strong wing muscles and the ability to beat their wings nearly 80 times per second permit them to fly forward, backward, and upside down; to hover or zoom along at high speed; and to stop on a dime. Because their legs are comparatively underdeveloped, hummers must fly even short distances.



Gardeners are most likely to see a hummingbird hovering near a flower, inserting its needlelike bill and extending its tongue to draw nectar from deep inside the flower. All this activity requires a lot of energy in the form of sucrose, which is precisely what the birds get from nectar. Hummingbirds' lives depend on finding this high-energy fuel almost constantly, which is part of the reason they are so easily attracted to flowers and feeders.

To attract returning migratory hummers in spring, put out feeders and select flowering plants that will bloom in time to appeal to early arrivals, usually males that migrate northward several weeks before females and juveniles. To learn when to expect hummers in your area, check migration maps. Detailed maps are available on the [hummingbirds.net](http://hummingbirds.net) Web site.

## Natural Attraction: Flowers

Simply by growing a variety of nectar-producing flowering plants, gardeners are already doing a lot to attract hummingbirds. Maximizing the attractiveness of your garden for hummers means choosing plants with brightly colored flowers (especially red, pink, yellow, and orange) that produce ample amounts of nectar. Tubular flowers tend to be the best, producing and retaining nectar even in hot weather or in a rainstorm.

Among popular hummingbird plants are single varieties of trumpet creeper, impatiens, bee balm, and salvia. Native plants are preferable, but many hummer enthusiasts swear by exotics such as single varieties of fuchsia, as well as lantana and red-hot poker (*Kniphofia uvaria*). For additional suggestions, see "Best Plants" list at the end of this article.

Plan a garden that is in bloom for as long as possible. To find the best early- and late-blooming species for your area, consult a regional gardening guide, or ask a nursery. Successful gardens feature a mix of annuals and perennials as well as vines, shrubs, and trees with nectar-producing flowers.

In our southeastern Ohio garden (USDA Hardiness Zone 6), the hummers love 'Gartenmeister' fuchsia, lantana, orange trumpet creeper, delphinium, coral bells, and zinnias. To prolong blooming, we regularly dead-head the flowers.

## Consistent Alternative: Feeders

Next best to planting a hummingbird garden is placing nectar-filled feeders in strategic spots. Feeders come in all shapes and sizes and, like flowers, some are better than others. Choose one that is easy to fill, easy to hang, and easy to take apart for cleaning. Heavy-duty plastic feeders, especially those with red or orange parts to attract passing birds, are better than ceramic or glass feeders.

### Making a Nectar Solution.

Nectar is easy to make. In a pan, combine 4 cups of water with 1 cup of white sugar and boil until dissolved. (This water-sugar ratio most closely resembles natural flower nectar; you can multiply amounts to make more at a time.) Cool before using, and store extra nectar in a sterile container in the refrigerator

### Nectar Don'ts

- Don't use anything but white sugar; never use molasses, honey, sugar substitutes, powdered, or brown sugar.
- Don't increase the proportion of sugar; more sugar is not better for the birds' digestive systems.
- Don't add red coloring to nectar. There is debate about the ill effects of the coloring. If your feeder lacks red parts, tie a red ribbon to it.
- Don't add any so-called nutrients to the mixture; these may promote the growth of fungi and bacteria. Hummingbirds get protein from insects.

## Location, Location, Location

Place your feeder where you can see and enjoy it. Once the birds find the feeder, they won't be shy about visiting, even if you are nearby. In the hottest months, hang the feeder in a shaded spot to keep the nectar from spoiling rapidly.

Wash the feeder each time you refill it. Scrub feeders occasionally with a brush, after a soaking in a mild bleach-water mixture (1 part bleach to 9 parts water), which kills any bacteria in the feeder.

- Now you're ready to enjoy hummingbirds all season. As days get shorter and hummers begin their winter migration, it's important to keep feeders clean and well supplied. Take the feeders down when you don't see any birds for a week or two.

## **Which Hummers Do You Have?**

The ruby-throated hummingbird is the only regular, widespread summer visitor in North America east of the Great Plains. In mountain regions of the West, several species are widespread, including black-chinned, broad-tailed, calliope, and rufous hummingbirds. Along the Pacific Coast, the large Anna's hummingbird may be found, as well as Allen's, black-chinned, broad-tailed, calliope, Costa's, and rufous hummingbirds. All of the West Coast hummers are also found in the desert Southwest along with the blue-throated and broad-billed hummers. The berylline, Lucifer, violet-crowned, and white-eared species are found only within a limited range in southeastern Arizona. South Texas is now home to the northward-expanding buff-bellied hummingbird. While most North American species migrate out of the United States for the winter months, the Gulf Coast states host many wintering hummingbirds of several species.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

Why aren't there any hummingbirds at my feeders?

Most hummingbirds are not regular feeder visitors because they don't encounter feeders in the wild. A hummer must find a feeder and use it before it will recognize it as a food source. When natural sources of nectar, such as wildflowers, are available, hummers may not visit feeders at all. Place feeders near flowers that hummingbirds visit, and be patient!

### **One bully male keeps all the other hummers away. What can I do?**

To solve this common problem, hang additional feeders near the main feeder. The bully won't be able to keep the other birds from the feeders and may give up. Or hang other feeders on the opposite side of your house, though this may serve to set up other territorial males.

### **How do I keep ants, bees, and wasps away?**

To deter ants, coat the feeder's hanger wire with petroleum jelly. Offer bees and wasps a small dish of nectar placed a few feet away from the feeder. They will gravitate to the easy meal. Once the insects find the nectar dish, move it farther away. If feeders don't already have bee guards, install these plastic screens that cover the feeder holes.

### **My solution keeps turning cloudy and then black. Is this bad?**

Yes. This indicates that mold or fungus may be growing in the solution. It can harm the birds. Remove the feeder immediately, and clean it out with a mild bleach-water solution. Rinse it, and allow it to air-dry before refilling. When temperatures are higher than 80oF, clean feeders every day or two.

## Best Plants for Hummingbirds

Key to lists below: Common name (*botanical name*)

### Flowers (Annual and Perennial and Bulbs)

- Canna (*Canna sp*)
- Columbine (*Aquilegia*)
- Delphinium
- Coral bells (*Heuchera sanguinea*)
- Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*)
- Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- Cosmos (*Cosmos sp*)
- Day Lillies (*Hemerocallis*)
- Flame Acanthus (*Acanthus mollis*)
- Flowering Tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*)
- Four O Clock (*Mirabilis jalapa*)
- Foxglove (*digitalis purpurea*)
- Geranium (*pelargonium sp*)
- Gladiolus (*Gladiolus sp*)
- Hollyhock (*Althea rosea*)
- Iris (*Iris sp*)
- Lupine (*Lupine hybrids*)
- Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)
- Penstemon (*penstemon sp*)
- Petunia (*Petunia hybrids*)
- Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)
- Scarlet sage (*S. splendens*)
- Verbena (*Verbena sp*)
- Zinnia (*Zinnia sp*)

### Vines

- Bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea sp*)
- Trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*)
- Trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)

### Shrubs

- Autumn Sage (*Salvia greggii*)
- Butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*)
- Bottlebrush (*Callistemon citrinus*)
- Hibiscus (*Hibiscus sp*)
- Lantana (*Lantana sp*)
- Mexican Bush Sage (*Salvia leucantha*)