



# Hummingbirds 101

*A guide to the basics of understanding, attracting, and feeding hummingbirds*

If you love hummingbirds and want to attract them to your home, you will enjoy this concentrated collection of information! You may also wish to visit the website of the Hummingbird Society: [www.hummingbirdsociety.org](http://www.hummingbirdsociety.org)

## Flowers

Flowers grown in a garden or in containers are nature's hummingbird feeder. The right combination of wildflowers and exotic flowers appropriate for your growing zone will attract hummingbirds, increase the number of small insects that hummingbirds require for their survival, and will bring beauty and interest to your garden. The ideal hummingbird flower contains nectar at the base of a single tubular flower; this shape and lack of fragrance discourages insect use. Hummingbirds need to feed every 15 minutes and may visit as many as 1,000 flowers each day, so flowers need to be numerous and constantly regenerating. Red flowers are popular, but flowers of other colors also contain nectar and attract hummingbirds. Seek flowers with a long bloom period and make sure that a great hummingbird flower is in bloom at every point during your hummingbird season, especially during the spring and fall migration periods. Additionally, it is important to provide "cover" in the form of mature trees and thick shrubbery. Some of the best and easiest to grow hummingbird flowers include:

- Lonicera sempervirens*  
(Trumpet Honeysuckle)
- Red Monarda 'Jacob Cline'*  
(Bee Balm) ■ ●
- Cuphea 'David Verity'* ▼ ■ ●
- Salvia guaranitica* (Blue Anise Sage) ●
- Salvia coccinea* (Scarlet Sage)
- Agastache rupestris* (Sunset Hyssop) ✂
- Campsis radicans* (Trumpet Creeper)
- Lobelia cardinalis* (Cardinal Flower) ■ ●
- Fuchsia triphylla* (Honeysuckle)

- Fuchsia) ▼ ■
- Malvaviscus arboreus var. drummondii*  
(Turk's Cap) ■
- Justicia spicigera*  
(Mexican Honeysuckle) ■
- Ipomopsis rubra* (Standing Cypress) ✂
- Nicotiana mutabilis*  
(Flowering Tobacco)
- Tecomaria capensis*  
(Cape Honeysuckle) ■
- Salvia 'Wendy's Wish'*
- Canna indica* (Wild Canna) ●
- Hamelia patens* (Firebush) ■
- Erythrina herbacea* (Coral Bean) ■
- Anisacanthus wrightii* (Flame Acanthus) ■

- Best in warmer weather areas
- Best in cooler climates
- ✂ Requires dry, well drained soil
- Best in moist soils
- ▼ Best grown in containers, especially in cooler areas

## Feeders

*Type:* The best feeder is one you are able and willing to clean. If the feeder ports are above the pool of liquid there is less tendency to drip, a messy problem that attracts ants.

*Size:* Use a feeder whose size matches your population. Don't fill it up if all the nectar isn't being used.

Several small feeders are better than one large feeder and will support more hummers, helping deal with territoriality.

*Recipe:* Dissolve 1 cup table sugar (cane preferred, beet is OK) in 4 cups water. Do not use any other sugar—not turbinado, brown sugar, etc.—and never use honey or artificial sweeteners. Spring water is best, but most tap water is OK; don't use distilled water.



No red food coloring! Store unused mixture in a refrigerator up to a week.

**Freshness:** Change the mixture every 4 days or so (more often if temperatures exceed 90° F.), because it will ferment. Change it immediately if it appears cloudy or if you see mold.

**Maintenance:** Feeders must be cleaned between refillings; don't "top off" without cleaning. Use mild detergent and water, and rinse thoroughly. At least once a month, soak in a dilute (1 tbsp/cup) bleach solution to sterilize the feeder, and, of course, rinse very thoroughly. Some feeders can be sterilized by cleaning in a dishwasher.

**Location:** Place feeders out of the reach of cats or at least 4 feet above ground and in the shade if possible. Never place a feeder near a nest, for doing so may invite predation.

## Other Suggestions

**Water for bathing:** More than most birds, hummers need to bathe regularly due to the sticky nature of nectar. They prefer very shallow, moving water, or a spray mist.

**Spoil them:** Hummers return to sites where they found good food supplies the year before. Give them reason to come back to you!

## Important Facts to Know

\* Of the 338 known species, 16 breed in the U.S. Hummers are found only in the New World; 34 species are endangered.

\* Hummingbirds eat insects and tiny spiders to supply protein. They do not live on sugar-water alone, nor will they develop diabetes from too much sugar.

\* Hummer nests are often re-used, wholly or in part. If you find a nest, leave it in place; it is illegal to possess a nest or any part of it without a permit.

\* Hummingbirds won't use "birdhouses" for their nests, because they are not cavity nesters.

\* Hummingbirds migrate at a time determined by genetic programming; you won't hold them back by leaving out your feeders. In fact, you can help stragglers/late migrants by leaving feeders up until you have not seen a hummer for at least a month.

\* Injured or baby hummingbirds cannot be cared for without the knowledge and help of a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. *Don't try to do it yourself and risk the bird's life; get help, fast!*

\* Hummingbird predators include cats, larger birds, snakes, squirrels, praying mantids(!), and others.



## Our Hummingbird Festival is held in one of the world's most beautiful settings!

Always held the first weekend in August, our festival is a hummingbird lover's delight: presentations by experts, garden tours, breakfast with the hummingbirds, banding demonstrations, and a Hummingbird Marketplace to shop.

**The International Hummingbird Society** is a non-profit organization dedicated solely to hummingbirds. Our mission is to teach about hummingbirds and to work internationally to prevent extinction of the species at risk. To become a member, or give a membership to someone else, send \$30 to the address shown below (businesses send \$100). Members receive our color journal, *The Hummingbird Connection*. Donations of any size, including memorial or honorary donations, are always welcomed. You can join or donate by mail, online or by telephone. Higher levels of individual membership and corporate sponsorship options are available. See our website for details.

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