

HUMMINGBIRD Gardening

Fernbank Science Center ■ DeKalb County Schools
Compost Site and Gardens

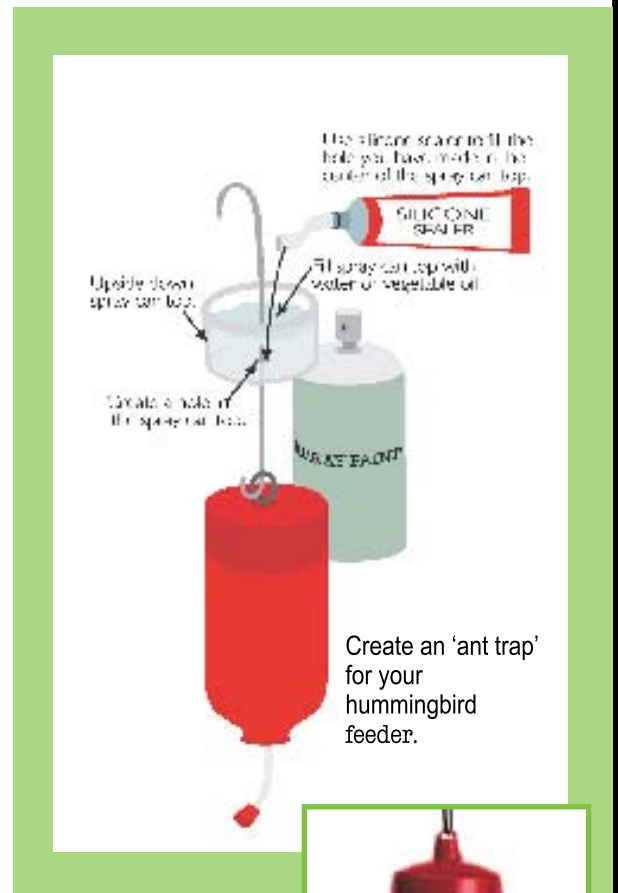


Tiny bejeweled hummingbirds zipping through your garden are an exciting encounter for anyone. Attracting these little birds to your yard is a relatively easy task. There are two ways to attract hummingbirds to your garden: *Offer nectar in hummingbird feeders. Plant flowers that attract hummingbirds.*

There are many different types of hummingbird feeders available so choose the type that you prefer and is easiest to clean. One consideration when choosing a feeder is the presence of perches. Hummingbirds have a very high metabolism and require an enormous number of calories just to stay alive. Hovering above a feeder is very tiring and burns a lot of calories, so a feeder with a perch can be a welcomed rest.

It is not necessary to buy nectar solutions from a store or to add red food coloring to your nectar solution. This solution is easily made with one part ordinary white sugar to four parts water. Start with two cups of water, bring it to a boil, and slowly add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of sugar. Stir the solution until the sugar is completely dissolved. Be sure to allow the nectar to come to room temperature before adding it to your feeders. You can store any unused syrup in the refrigerator. Nectar solutions will spoil rapidly in the heat so you do not need to fill your feeder to the top. A small amount in each feeder will prevent waste. When you refill your feeders, flush the feeder with hot tap water and use a bottle brush. You will not need to use soap if you are refilling every three or four days.

At least once a month you can clean your feeders with a very weak bleach solution (1/4 cup bleach to 1 gallon of water). Soak the feeder in this solution for at least one hour, scrub with your bottle brush, rinse thoroughly, and allow to air-dry completely before refilling them. Try experimenting with different types of feeders and hanging them in different areas of your yard. Male hummingbirds are fiercely territorial and will fight over feeders placed too close together. If you are lucky enough to live in an area of the country where you have several different species of hummingbirds visiting your feeders, try hanging your feeders at different heights to eliminate some of the fighting. Ants will insist on finding your feeders, so try a dripless feeder. You can also make your own ant trap (illustration above) by running the hanging wire of the feeder through a hole in an upside down spray can top (use some silicone sealer to seal the hole) and fill it with water or vegetable oil. If your feeder has yellow plastic flowers, try painting them red before you hang the feeder for the first time. Yellow attracts bees and wasps.



Consider choosing feeders that have several perches.

HUMMINGBIRD GARDENS

Hummingbirds are attracted to gardens that have red tubular flowers. Luckily, there are many of these plants to choose from. Over 1,670 native, North American plants depend exclusively on hummingbirds for pollination. **PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE USE OF PESTICIDES AROUND HUMMINGBIRD PLANTS IS NOT A GOOD IDEA!** Killing garden pests also kills the small insects that hummingbirds eat for protein. Pesticides also might be directly ingested by birds which could cause illness and even death.

In Georgia, these are some of the plants that will successfully attract hummingbirds:

SHRUBS

Coral Tree (*Erythrina bidwillii*)
Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*)
(*Lantana* spp)
(*Rhododendron* spp)

VINES

Common Flowering Quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa*)
Abelia (*Abelia grandiflora*)
Goldflame Honeysuckle (*Lonicera heckrottii*)
Cypress Vine (*Quamoclit pennata*)
Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*)
Scarlet Star Glory (*Ipomoea coccinea*)
Common Trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*)
Trumpet Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)
Morning Glory (*Ipomoea* spp)
Scarlet Runner Bean (*Phaseolus coccineus*)

TREES

Flowering Maple (*Abutilon pictum*)
Flowering Crabapple (*Malus* spp)
Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
Locust (*Robinia*)
Red Flowering Gum (*Eucalyptus ficifolia*)
Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*)
Manzanita
Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*)
Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*)
Weigela (*Weigela* spp)

FLOWERS

Perennials

Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*)
Canna (*Canna xgeneralis*)
Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
Columbine (*Aquilegia* spp)
Four-O-Clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa*)
Hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea*)
Hosta (*Hosta* spp)
Penstemon (*Penstemon* spp)
Yucca (*Yucca filamentosa*)
Coral Bells (*Heuchera sanguinea*)
Scarlet Sage (*Salvia splendens*)
Texas Sage (*Salvia coccinea*)
Anise Sage (*Salvia guaranitica*)
Pineapple Sage (*Salvia elegans*)
Mexican Cigar Plant (*Cuphea ignea*, *C. miniata*)
Obedient Plant (*Physostegia* spp)
Red Hot Poker (*Kniphofia uvaria*)
Spider Flower (*Cleome hasslerana*)
Jupiter's-beard (*Centranthus ruber*)

Annuals

Flowering Tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*)
Beard Tongue (*Penstemon gloxinoides*)
Fuchsia (*Fuchsia magellanica*)
Impatiens (*Impatiens* spp)
Petunia (*Petunia* spp)
Red Salvia
Shrimp Plant (*Justicia brandegeana*)
Geranium (*Pelargonium* spp)
Begonia (*Begonia* spp) Pentas
(*Pentas lanceolata*)
Sweet Pea (*Lathyrus odoratus*)

*Other things to consider for your yard:
Because hummers spend around 80% of their time sitting on twigs and leaf stems, convenient perching spots will make your yard much more attractive to them. Hummers also love water and are attracted to shallow bird baths and misters.*