

## Attracting Hummingbirds

### Hummingbird Characteristics

Attracting hummingbirds to your garden is easy and beneficial. As they feed on the nectar from your flowers, hummingbirds pick up pollen and carry it to surrounding flowers in your garden, providing a simple yet important task known as pollination.

Hummingbirds are one of the most interesting and fascinating creatures to watch. Their design and shape are unique and include a pair of feet that are used only to perch and a pair of wings that enable them to fly forward and backward and to hover, giving them the appearance of floating in air. Their ability to fly in many directions gives them the confidence to relax around humans, which makes them so enjoyable to be around.

### Preferred Flowers

Hummingbirds lack a well-developed sense of smell, so they are drawn to flowers by their colour. They prefer flowers that are red, orange or pink, and flowers that are trumpet shaped. Some favourites include the trumpet creeper, morning glory and butterfly bush. Many of the same bushes and trees that attract butterflies will also attract hummingbirds.

### Feeder Types and Location

Hummingbird feeders are one of the most effective ways to attract a hummingbird to your backyard. Hummingbird feeders are sold in various garden centers and birding shops and are made of plastic, glass and ceramic. Hummers may be attracted to various feeder

styles and colours, so choose one that is easy to disassemble and clean.

The time it takes to attract a hummingbird to your feeder can vary greatly. Hummingbirds don't recognize the feeders as a food source, so they must learn to use them. Placing the feeder over your garden will attract them to feed on both flowers and the nectar you have provided them.

### Feeder Mixture

The nectar used to fill the feeder is only a supplement to the bird's natural diet. Making your own nectar can be done by combining white cane sugar to four parts boiled water; the mixture can be stored for up to two weeks in the refrigerator. A feeder that will store enough nectar for three or four days is a necessity. If left longer, the mixture could become contaminated by a bacterial buildup harmful to hummers.

Along with nectar from flowers, hummingbirds feed throughout the day on insects (some on flowers and some in the air), spiders and occasionally the sap of trees.

### Return Visits

Feeders should be placed outside as soon as the first flowers open in spring and can be left out until September. Daily maintenance will ensure that your feathered friends keep visiting. Feeders can be refilled until the birds stop using them for a week or more in the fall, indicating that they won't return until spring.

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