



MARCH NEWSLETTER 2009

Patty's Plants



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Fun Facts About Hummingbirds

- There are over 330 different types of hummingbirds
- They are the world's smallest bird
- The average hummingbird flaps its wings at a stunning 50 flaps per second
- Hummingbirds consume 2/3 of their body weight each day

Patty's Spring Favorite "The Hummingbird"

Hummingbirds are amazing creatures. If you've ever been enjoying or working in your garden and had a hummingbird buzz by your head, you have to just freeze and watch them. I usually hold my breath, afraid I'll disturb them and they'll fly away. The way they buzz from one flower to the next is incredible. This spring before your garden flowers are blooming, get ready for the hummingbirds. Do you have feeders? Are they clean? Do you remember how to mix up their food? This newsletter will be dedicated to this tiny little garden bird. If you don't have an area for a hummer garden, plant a flowering container garden especially for them. While

red is one of their favorite colors, there are many other flower colors they will be just as happy with. The most important thing is to have a garden of continuous



blooming flowers from spring to fall, so

Hummingbirds are great pollinators

the hummers can have an endless supply of nectar. I will provide a list of plants hummingbirds love so they will feel comfortable sharing your garden with you. They really are entertaining with their fascinating antics and beautiful colors.

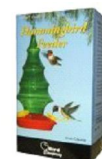
Cleaning the Feeder

When cleaning out the feeder use only water, vinegar and a stiff bottle brush since birds are sensitive to chemicals. They must be cleaned often, the sugar water can create mold and bacteria quickly. Many diseases can spread and we don't want to make these special birds sick.

Not only that, but ants and earwigs are also fond of their food, they will get trapped and die in the feeder. Not a pretty site.



12 oz & 16 oz 3 bee resistant (holes) nectar station, snap apart base for easy cleaning.



Food for Hummers

Hummers need a constant food supply. They are tiny flying machines. Their metabolic rate is so high that they must feed almost constantly during the day. A feeder with red on it will help to get their attention, or you can add red ribbons to the feeder to attract more attention from the air.

Place the feeder in the open where the hummers can find it because they fly 30-50 feet overhead. If the feeder is under a tree or patio, they may miss it. Place your feeder out in the beginning of April for their arrival this spring, and by August/September for when they leave in the fall. It is not true that hummers will forget to fly south if you leave the feeder out too late in the fall. Hummers migrate based on their internal hormones, and the length of the day (not food availability). Please try to avoid using pesticides as much as possible because spi-

ders and other small insects are an important part of the hummers regular diet, especially when they are feeding a hungry family. If you must use insecticides or fungicides, choose an organic control. Spot treat only the plants that are in trouble.

How to make your own nectar:

Mix 4 parts water to 1 part sugar

Boil until all sugar is dissolved

Cool. Do not add food coloring, they don't need it and it's not good for them.

Change the solution every 3 days or so. Keep leftovers in frig for 1 week.

Planning the Hummingbird Garden

When planning your hummingbird garden, the first thing that needs to be picked out is the location. The hummingbird garden needs to be positioned where you can see it. You'll want to have the camera handy too.

Then think about how much room you have to work with. A hummingbird garden can be as small as a window box, container garden, hanging basket or as large your entire yard.

Your garden will also need both sun and shade. Hummingbirds like to hum around in the sun, but they do need shade to rest, cool off, and make a nest for their young. Hummingbirds prefer to nest 5 to 15 feet off the ground.

Trees and shrubs close by provide weather protection and a nesting place. Which also keeps them safe from their predators, like kitty cats looking for a fresh meal.

You need to provide water too. Water is very im-

portant to a hummingbird garden. Hummingbirds need water to drink and to bathe. A small birdbath or even a shallow bowl works well. Make sure you change out the water every other day or so to prevent mosquitoes from breeding. Also, try putting in a water mister. The hummingbirds really like taking a shower in a mister and watching



them can be pretty entertaining. When picking the flowers, be careful of hybrid flowers as they can produce less nectar than their wild cousins. This doesn't mean that they should not be used, just don't be surprised if they prefer a wild cousin. Try to select flowers that bloom at different times

of the year so that there will always be flowers around for the hummers. Also, use a variety of flowers. We don't like to eat the same thing every day, and neither do they.

Top favorite flowers for hummers: Butterflies love them too!

Bee Balm (Monarda didyma)- A perennial in zones 4-9. It blooms in June and July. Bee balm comes in all shades of red, pinks and purples. It grows 20"-36" tall with a 3-5 ft spread. This flower grows in sun to light shade it will continue to bloom if you prune the old flowers off.

Butterfly Bush (Buddleia species)- Hardy to zones 4-9. Should be mulched over in colder zones. It blooms mid-summer to fall with fragrant lilac shaped flowers. This plant can get 6-15 ft tall and 4-10 ft wide. Sun to light shade is preferred.

Butterfly Weed (Asclepias tuberosa)- This beautiful bright orange flowered perennial (4-9) blooms summer to fall. It will reseed in other areas of your garden. Sun is best. It gets 2-3 ft tall by 12-24" wide.

Cardinal Flower (Lobelia cardinalis)-This has a perfect red trumpet flower that hummingbirds seem to be most attracted to. A perennial: zones 4-9, it grows 3-4ft tall and 2ft wide. Plant in fertile, moist soil in part shade to full sun.

Fuchsia (Fuchsia species)-Fuchsia hanging baskets are a must for me. This annual will attract hummers all summer long. Place your fuchsia on a north or east porch. They like it a bit cooler so

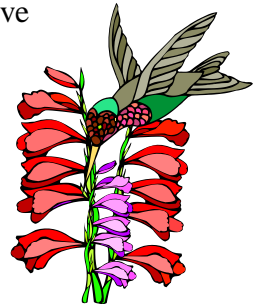
shade is good. Always pick off the fruit after the flower falls to promote new flowers.

Honeysuckle Vine (Lonicera) The fragrant trumpet-shaped flowers are very attractive to hummingbirds, and most birds like the red or black berries. The leaves provide food for the larvae of many butterflies. I have a variegated leaf variety with pale pink and yellow flowers. My hummers love it. Be careful with this vine though some can be very invasive.

Salvia (Salvia splendens)-Annual salvias come in reds, purples and coral. Hummers love their trumpet flowers. Plant in full sun. Deadhead the flowers to keep them blooming all summer.

Snapdragons (Antirrhinum)- Another annual I must put in my garden are snapdragons. They remind me of my grandmother. She would show me how to play with them like tiny talking puppets. Grow in full sun to part shade. They will keep hummers around until frost.

Trumpet Vine (Campsis radicans)-A perennial vine hardy in zones 4-9. Once it gets established it will be very hard to get rid of, so make sure this is the vine for you. The hummers love it.



Keeping unwelcome visitors from hummers feeders

Here are some tips to keep ants, earwigs, wasps and bees from taking over the hummingbirds feeders:

- Use fishing line to hang light-weight feeders to control ants.
- Use Vaseline on the wire or lines that the feeder hangs on
- Try wrapping flypaper around the branch or the stake that the feeder is on. Although this method will attract the good beneficials too.
- To control bees, wasps and earwigs put Vaseline, mineral oil, or even salad oil around the

feeder holes. The opening will become slippery and they will be unable to take hold.



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“The Impostor” Hummingbird Moth



This moth is sometimes mistaken for hummingbirds. They belong to the family of moths technically called the Sphingidae family or Sphinx family of moths. They fly strong and fast like a hummingbird with a rapid wing beats. The hummingbird moth is usually active at dusk. However, they have been known to be active throughout the day traveling from flower to flower, much like a hummingbird. The hummingbird moth will feed on flowers like a hummingbird. But instead of a beak and tongue to lap the nectar, they have little straws to sip the nectar from a flower. As much as I love watching this moth in my flower garden, I must keep a careful eye on my veggie garden. This fun little hummingbird impostor is also a tomato hornworm.



They feed only on solanaceous plants, most often on tomato. However, the larvae will also attack eggplant, pepper, and potato plants. They will eat all the leaves in just one night. Very sad!

More of the best plants for attracting hummingbirds to your garden

Annuals

Cleome
Cuphea
Geranium
Gladiolus
Fuchsia
Impatiens
Nicotiana
Petunias
Salvia
Snapdragons

Shrubs, Vines, Tropicals

Abutilon– flowering maple (tropical)
Abelia
Azalea
Bougainvillea (tropical)
Butterfly bush
Coralberry
Hibiscus (tropical)
Honeysuckle
Mandevilla (tropical)
Rhododendron
Rose of Sharon

Trumpet vine
Weigela
Perennials
Beebalm
Bleeding heart
Cardinal flowers
Catmint
Columbine
Coralbells (Heuchera)
Crocus
Daylilies
Dianthus (pinks)
Hardy Hibiscus
Hollyhocks
Liatris
Lilies
Lupines
Penstemon
Phlox
Red hot pokers
Rose mallow
Salvia
Turtlehead (Chelone)

