

Attracting Hummingbirds

One good way to enjoy the company of hummingbirds is planting a **hummingbird garden**. In addition to providing them a natural diet, a hummer garden is an excellent way to attract birds to your nearby [feeder](#): since hummingbirds feed by sight on regularly-followed routes - called *traplines* - their inquisitive nature will quickly lead them to investigate any possible new source of food. A hummer garden is also a great way to capture the birds on film or video, and makes a much nicer backdrop for your photos than the typical plastic feeder. If you plan carefully and select a variety of plants that flower at successively later dates, you will be rewarded with happy hummers throughout the season.

Using **pesticides** around hummingbird plants is a very bad idea. Killing garden pests will also eliminate the small insects hummingbirds rely upon for protein. In addition, hummers might directly ingest pesticides sprayed onto flowers, which could sicken or kill the birds. Remember: *if you wouldn't eat it yourself, don't feed it to a hummingbird!* (Well, maybe not the bugs...)

Since hummers, like most birds, have virtually no sense of smell, the flowers that attract them tend to have little or no fragrance, apparently directing their resources instead toward high visibility and nectar production. Note also that cultivated hybrids often make much less nectar than wild strains. While you should visit your local nursery for suggestions specific to your climate and area, here are some of the best plants to consider if you're planning a hummingbird garden:

Plants to Attract and Feed Hummingbirds

Trees and Shrubs

- Azalea
- Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia*)
- Cape Honeysuckle
- Flame Acanthus
- Flowering Quince
- Lantana
- Manzanita
- Mimosa
- Red Buckeye
- Tree Tobacco
- Turk's Cap
- Weigela

Vines

- Coral Honeysuckle
- Cypress Vine
- Morning Glory
- Scarlet Runner Bean
- Trumpet Creeper

Flowers

- Some may be annuals or perennials depending on climate.

Perennials

- Bee Balm (*Monarda*)
- Canna
- Cardinal Flower
- Columbine

- Coral Bells
- Four O'Clocks
- Foxglove
- Hosta
- Hummingbird Mint (*Agastache*)
- Little Cigar
- Lupine
- Penstemon
- Yucca

Annuals

- Beard Tongue (and other pen stems)
- Firespike
- Fuchsia
- Impatiens
- Jacobiana
- Jewelweed
- Petunia
- Various *Salvia* species
- Shrimp Plant

NOTE: Japanese Honeysuckle attracts hummingbirds, too, but it's an invasive and troublesome exotic species that's no longer recommended.

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Other sites with good gardening advice:

[Operation RubyThroat: Hummingbird Gardens](#)

[NJ Audubon Society Nature Notes](#)

See also this [book review](#).

In addition to food sources, convenient perching opportunities will make your yard more hospitable to hummingbirds, since they spend around 80% of their time sitting on twigs, leaf stems, clotheslines, etc., between feeding forays and sorties against trespassing rivals.

Another way to get hummingbirds' attention is to festoon (be *tasteful*, now!) your feeder with red or orange **surveyor's tape**, available in hardware stores. It is thought that hummers are sensitive to ultraviolet light, which these fluorescent tapes reflect in abundance. Regardless, if you hang a feeder, sooner or later a hummingbird will come to investigate; it has been conjectured that, in a given year, not a square meter of the U.S. or southern Canada goes unchecked by hummers in their relentless quest for food.

