

## GREEN THUMB GREENHOUSE

### **Attracting Hummingbirds**

When it comes to hummingbirds, the garden is meant for sharing. Very few people can resist the feeling of magic brought on by the sight of a hummingbird hovering near an azalea bloom. People instinctively lower their voice and speak in whispers when they sight these visitors. Whether you have a garden as small as an apartment balcony or as large as a country estate, there are things you can do to welcome these amazing birds.

#### **Nature's Way**

The Ruby-throated hummingbird is the variety that visits our area each summer. As unbelievable as it may seem, they spend their winters in Mexico and Central America. And we aren't even its farthest summer home. Some continue on past us hundreds of miles into Canada. Each fall, they migrate south and follow the same route back the next year, often to the exact same yard. Only the male Ruby-throated hummingbird has the bright red throat. Both are iridescent green on their back and heads and have a white underside. They average below 4 inches in length. They build tiny nests and rear 2 or 3 young each year.

Hummingbirds are amazing creatures that have developed the ability to extract nectar from deep-throated flowers with their long, thin bills while in mid-air. Hovering requires a tremendous amount of energy, so they are very active feeders. Their primary food is nectar from flowers. In early spring, before the flowers are blooming, they often drink sap from tree wounds created by woodpeckers. Hummingbirds supplement the sugars from nectar and sap with insects for protein.

#### **Plants for Hummingbirds**

To attract them to your garden, include several plants with tubular flowers that bloom over a long period of time. At first, they will be drawn to your garden by bright colors (red and orange) but once there, they will check out all the flowers, no matter what color. Included on the back of this information sheet are lists of the different types of plants that attract hummingbirds. Fuchsias are great because they are one of their favorites and they bloom for months. A hanging basket of fuchsia can be added to almost any garden space, including the balcony of an apartment. You don't have to sacrifice garden design by trying to include all these plants; just select a few that will work in with your plan. In addition to a source of nectar, hummingbirds will need trees and shrubs for shelter and nesting.

#### **Supplemental Feeding**

Natural sources of food should be supplemented feeders. Hummingbird feeders are designed to provide a sugar-water solution. Hang them in a Shady area that is open enough that the tiny birds won't fall prey to cats. Be sure to keep the feeders clean. It is essential to clean them frequently, because in warm air the sweet liquid can quickly allow growth of molds and bacteria that may kill the hummingbirds. Syrup can be made from commercial mixes or by combining 4 parts water and 1 part sugar (do not use honey). Heat the mixture to dissolve the sugar,

cool before using and keep any extra syrup in the refrigerator until it is needed. It is important to consistently provide this supplemental food for your visiting hummingbirds. It is very difficult to keep enough plants blooming to provide their nectar needs all summer.

## **Plants That Attract Hummingbirds**

### **Annuals**

Snapdragons *Antirrhinum*  
Spider Flower *Cleome*  
Geranium *Pelargonium*  
Impatiens *Impatiens*

Four O'Clock *Mirabilis*  
Flowering Tobacco *Nicotinana*  
Petunia *Petunia*  
Nasturtium *Tropaeolum*  
Scarlet Sage *Salvia splendens*  
Verbena *Verbena*  
Zinnia *Zinnia*

### **Perennials**

Hollyhocks *Althea*  
Bearberry *Arctostaphylos*  
Columbine *Aquilegia*  
Butterfly Weed *Asclepias tuberosa*  
Delphinium *Delphinium*  
Bleeding Heart *Dicentra*  
Foxglove *Digitalis*  
Gentian *Gentiana*  
Daylilies *Hemerocallis*  
Coral Bells *Heuchera*  
Hibiscus *Hibiscus moscheutos*  
Varieties of Hosta *Hosta*  
Gayfeather *Liatris*  
Cardinal Flower *Lobelia cardinalis*  
Bee Balm *Monarda*  
Beardstongue *Penstemon*  
Sweet William *Phlox stolonifer*  
Summer Phlox *Phlox maculata a*

Evening Primrose *Oenothera*  
Garden Phlox *Phlox paniculata*  
Aesculus glabra  
Catalpa Catalpa

### **Trees and Shrubs**

Horse Chestnut *Aesculus h.*  
Buckeye  
Redbud *Cercis canadensis*  
Hawthorne *Crataegus*  
Crabapples and Apples *Malus*  
Locust *Robinia*  
Butterfly Bush *Buddleia davidii*  
Currant *Ribes odoratum*  
Azalea *Rhododendron spp.*  
Rhododendron *Rhododendron spp.*  
Gooseberry *Ribes speciosum*  
Lilacs *Syringia*  
Weigela *Weigela*

### **Vines**

Trumpet Creeper *Campsis radicans*  
Morning Glory *Ipomoea*  
Honeysuckle *Lonicera*  
Scarlet Runner Bean *Phaseolus cocc.*  
Cypress Vine *Quamoclit*

### **Miscellaneous**

Fuchsia *Fuchsia*  
Glads *Gladiolus*  
Tiger Lilies *Lilium*  
Strawberries *Fragaria*