

ATTRACTING HUMMINGBIRDS TO YOUR YARD

The Three D's: Diversity, Dimensions, Dynamics

Attracting and enjoying hummingbirds in your yard is one of the great enjoyments here in the upper midwest. In northern Minnesota, the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) piles up frequent flier miles like no other bird. In our yard we watch them dart in and out of our flowers, hover over the waterway, and then perch in a secluded hideaway.

From their private perch these tiny birds keep a constant eye on their surroundings. With grace, agility and speed hummingbirds launch at any intruder, whether that is another hummingbird or a larger bird wandering into their territory. After a quick battle, the victor returns to his (or her) perch, preens and is on the lookout once again. A hummingbird's blazing speed, agility, amusing squeaky chatter, and tractor like sound of wings as they buzz by, makes them a truly unique and amazing creature. Best of all, there are simple things you can do in your yard to create an environment that is inviting to hummingbirds.

DIVERSITY

In our yard as a part of our landscaping, we have incorporated a variety of plantings that provide the type of food source and cover that we have observed hummingbirds use. Following is a list that has been successful for us. This list is by no means all inclusive and are simply plants that we have used with good results in our own yards. As well as the below listed plants, hummingbirds enjoy sitting on the ends of tree branches where their satiny green backs camouflage them as tree leaves.

Shrubs:	
Diervilla lonicera (Bush Honeysuckle)	Small yellow flowers provide early attraction
Lonicera xylosteum 'Claveyi' (Clavey's Dwarf Honeysuckle)	Small yellow flowers in early spring
Weigela florida "Red Prince" (Red prince Weigela)	Red blooms throughout the summer
Rhododendron 'Northern Lights' (Northern Lights Azeleas)	Light to deep pink flowers; protect from rabbits in fall and winter
Vines	
Lonicera 'Mandarin' (Mandarin Honeysuckle)	Attractive flowers from late spring throughout the summer. Very attractive to hummingbirds.
Lonicera x brownii 'Dropmore Scarlet' (Dropmore Honeysuckle)	Orange tubular flowers all throughout the summer and into fall.
Scarlet Runner Beans – Annual	A great climber with red flowers. Also produces an eatable bean.
Red Morning Glory – Annual	Fast growing vine which produces blooms throughout the summer.
Cardinal Climber – Annual	Produces small delicate red flowers, a favorite of hummingbirds.

Annuals	
Lady in Red Salvia	Finer red flowers than the typical red flowering Salvia. It has been the most successful annual for attracting hummingbirds in our yard.
Blue Salvia	Provides diversity, especially in the fall.
Tithonia Mexican Sunflower	Various sizes, but have a small compact orange flower. Very appealing to hummingbirds.
Impatiens	A wonderful annual when massed in front of hostas; provides color for attraction. Also a good attractor for the hummingbird moth.
Cannas	Red Cannas are annuals in the northern part of the country. Hummingbirds seem to enjoy the taller varieties the best.
Petunias	A good hardy annual that attracts attention. The trailing varieties are wonderful for hanging pots.
Fuschsia	A particular favorite of hummingbirds. In northern areas the plant can be brought in for the winter. If you bring the plant in spray the plant for white flies and other pests.
Perennials	
Aquilegia (Native Columbine)	A favorite of hummingbirds, blooms early in spring.
Dicentra (Old Fashioned Bleeding Heart)	A great plant for shaded areas in the upper midwest.
Heuchera (Coral Bells)	A small perennial that does well in partial shade.
Monarda 'Jacob Cline' Jacob Cline BeeBalm	A terrific, hardy red bloomer that is extremely attractive to hummingbirds.
Lobelia cardinalis (Cardinal Flower)	Beautiful tubular red blooms that have a fine texture.

DIMENSIONS

When planting for hummingbirds, be sure to use plantings that range in size from ground covers, to mid size, to those that are tall plant species or climbing vines that range six feet and more. Consider using hanging pots from an overhang of your home or garage, or even a second story window box. Hanging pots, window boxes and container plantings provide places for specimen plants and accents, and can provide depth and dimension to your landscaping.

Hummingbirds are feisty creatures and will examine every corner of your yard seeking their favorite flowers. Also provide masses of one type of plant (such as Lady in Red Salvia). You can watch for quite some time as the hummers go from flower to flower in one area. Expanding your

garden dimensions upward and outward provides more interest to hummingbirds and gives you more opportunities to enjoy the satiny green bird. Watch the males when sunlight strikes their throats – it will glisten like Dorothy’s Ruby Red slippers.

DYNAMICS

We have found that the more dynamic and invigorating we have made our landscape, the more attractive it has been for hummingbirds. Think of adding water, various feeders and different types of perching areas.

A waterfall with its trickling sounds and splashing water will become a magnet for hummingbirds. The small birds enjoy grabbing droplets of water as the water runs down the falls and into the streambed. Small water features can be just as effective as large ones in drawing in birds. Pond kits and small fountains with running water are available at retail stores.

Don’t manicure your trees and shrubs, rather leave a few dead twigs and branches for perching areas. Arbors, shepherd hooks and trellises give hummingbirds places to perch and watch over their empire. As well as various amenities, provide a variety of nectar feeders. Remember to clean the feeders every other day and replenish them with fresh nectar. Hummingbirds are very inquisitive and feed by sight, not smell. They have been observed checking out red and white fishing bobbers, a red dog collar (on a black Labrador) and a piece of orange surveyor’s ribbon. Lastly, but extremely important, these creatures are delicate. Avoid the use of insecticidal sprays, herbicides or other types of pesticides in their feeding and perching areas.

Not all parts of the country have hummingbirds throughout the year or even throughout the entire summer. But adding a few features to your yard can entice them in, even if it is just for a short time (like during their migration period) as well as making your yard more enjoyable.

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