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## **HUMMINGBIRD GARDENING**

One of the greatest pleasures of the garden is the sighting of a hummingbird. Hummingbirds are amazing creatures! They migrate north from Central America in early spring, drinking nectar from early blooming flowers such as Pulmonarias (Lungwort), Columbines, Quince, Bleeding Hearts, and Azaleas. They build their tiny nests (1-2" high and wide!) in tree branches, attaching them with spider web filaments. Their eggs are half the size of a jellybean and they usually only have one brood each year.

The metabolism of a hummingbird is very high. Their hearts beat 1260 times per minute, their wings beat 78 times per second! Because of this, they must consume seven times their body weight each day. Hummingbirds drink sweet nectar from flowers, sap from trees that have been damaged by woodpeckers, and eat hundreds of insects for protein. They are attracted to flowers by color, not by scent. They prefer flowers that are tubular, pendant, and those with petals curved out or back. Although they are most attracted to red, pink, or reddish orange blossoms, they also drink nectar from flowers of all colors including white Jasmine (used as a fragrant patio plant in the summer), blue and white Scabiosas, blue Delphiniums, and blue, pink or purple Platycodons (Balloon Flowers).

Hummingbirds are territorial and are drawn to yards that provide them with nectar flowers from early spring when they are hatching their young until October when they migrate south. To keep them around, plan your gardens and landscape to include hummingbird plants blooming each month. Some easy to grow choices that will provide a nice succession of bloom would include Coral Bells, Bee Balm, Penstemons, Phlox, hardy Hibiscus, Rose of Sharon, Cardinal Flower, Butterfly Weed, Lilies, Crocosmia, single Hollyhocks, Lupines, Liatris, Weigela, Butterfly Bush, Beauty Bush, Fuchsias, Nasturtiums, Petunias, and Zinnias. There are many, many more than this brief list, but this should get you started!

Hummingbird feeders are also a very popular way to increase your chances of having these special visitors. They are usually red glass or plastic hanging bottles filled with sugar water. To make your own solution, use one part sugar and 4 parts water. NEVER use honey as it can cause a fungus that can kill the hummingbirds. You must clean out the feeders every day in the summer or the sugar water will ferment, also endangering the birds. Place them no farther than 15 feet from the nearest cover such as trees or shrubs and not closer than 15 feet from your window to avoid having the hummingbirds fly into the glass.

Whether you garden in containers, have a small perennial or annual garden, or consider your entire yard a bird sanctuary, anyone can incorporate hummingbird plants into their landscape. Your reward will be having your flowers visited by one of the most fascinating creatures, nature's miniature miracles, the Ruby Throated Hummingbird.

## PERENNIALS AND BIENNIALS

Ajuga  
Alcea (Hollyhocks)  
Aquilegia (Columbine)  
Asclepias tuberosa (Butterfly Weed)  
Crocasmia (Montbretia Lily)  
Delphiniums and Larkspur  
Dianthus and Sweet Williams  
Dicentra (Bleeding Hearts)  
Heuchera sanguinea (Coral Bells)  
Hibiscus  
Kniphofia (Red Hot Poker)  
Liatris  
Liliums  
Lobelia cardinalis  
Lupines  
Lychnis chalconica, coronaria  
Monarda (Bee Balm)  
Penstemons  
Phlox  
Platycodon  
Pulmonaria  
Scabiosa  
Silene virginica (Fire Pink)  
Yucca

## TREES AND SHRUBS

Abelia  
Albizia julibrissa (Mimosa)  
Althaea (Rose of Sharon)  
Azaleas  
Buddliea (Butterfly Bush)  
Chaenomeles (Quince)  
Kolkwitzia (Beauty Bush)  
Lonicera (Honeysuckle)  
Vitex agnus-castus (Vitex or Chaste Tree)  
Weigela

## ANNUALS AND TROPICAL PLANTS

Agapanthus  
Begonias – single types  
Bougainvillea  
Camellia  
Canna Lilies  
Citrus plants – Lemons, Oranges  
Cleome (Spider flowers)  
Clerodendron  
Cuphea  
Dahlia – single form  
Four O’Clocks  
Fuchsias  
Gladiolus  
Hibiscus  
Impatiens  
Impatiens balsamina (Balsam)  
Jasmine  
Lantana  
Nasturtiums  
Pelargoniums (Geraniums)  
Pentas  
Petunias  
Phlox  
Pineapple Sage  
Salvia  
Verbena  
Zinnia

## VINES

Campsis radicans (Trumpet Vine)  
Ipomea (Morning Glory)  
Ipomea quamoclit (Cypress Vine)  
Lonicera (Honeysuckle)  
Phaseolus coccineus (Scarlet Runner Bean)

## WEEDS

Impatiens capensis (Jewelweed).  
A Ct. native, nectar plant for hummingbirds.  
Blooms a few days before they pass through on their migration path. Not to be confused with the invasive Impatiens glandulifera.

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