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April 10, 2009

TO: Greenville Herald Banner  
Tawakoni News  
Country World News  
Wolfe City Mirror  
Commerce Journal  
Kuumba Heritage  
Celeste Tribune  
Lone Oak Newsletter

FROM: Madeline Sullivan  
Master Gardener  
Hunt County

SUBJECT: Weekly News Column – On the Grow

The big spring event is on its way! The "Hummers" are coming from South America to our part of Texas. March 15--April 11, 2009 is the arrival date for the feisty, beautiful Ruby Throated Hummingbirds. So get busy and clean up your feeders or buy a new one. It will be just the right time, so do it immediately. The hummingbirds would be delighted to see a feeder with nectar ready for them.

If you have a feeder, clean it in hot water, but do not use harsh detergent on it. If you have any mold inside the feeder, use a bottle brush to clean it. If you are not able to reach the mold area with a bottle brush, put a little sand in the bottle with hot water and shake it vigorously. It should displace the mold.

When you are ready to put nectar in the bottle, do 1 part sugar and 4 parts water, boiled for two or three minutes, cool it and use about half a bottles worth. If you have a large bottle, use less than half of it. The reason for not filling the bottle is that you should

change your solution every 3 to 4 days and you don't want to waste your nectar. Each change, you must clean the bottle with hot water. Do Not Use Honey, as a nectar, because it ferments quickly, and might cause sores in the bird's mouth. Do Not Use Artificial Sweeteners because it has no food value. Do Not Use Red Food Coloring, in your nectar, because it might be harmful to your "Hummers".

All feeders have some red on them and it is probably enough to entice the "Hummer". If you wanted to add color, you could put a little red ribbon to hang on your feeder.

If you are buying a Hummingbird Feeder for the first time, do not take a very large feeder. Get a pint size to start. If you get many Hummers, you might need another a feeder where you can place it out of sight of the first feeder. "Hummers" are very territorial and defend flowers and feeders from their favorite roost spots. The Hummingbirds sit on a twig or a fence line, etc., about 80 per cent of their time, but then off they go like the wind to sip the flowers and the feeder to replace their energy.

The "Hummers" get most of their food from the flowers and small insects and spiders. Some flowers that are good for the Hummingbirds and lovely for your garden: Penstemon, Four O'Clocks, Canna, Hosta, Columbine, Petunia, Salvia of all types, Impatiens, Coral Honeysuckle, Wild Bergamot, Morning Glory, Lantana, Turk's Cap, Trumpet Vine and Flowering Quince. There are many, many more plants because, the Hummingbirds feed by sight or regularly followed routes. They are inquisitive creatures and will test any new source of food.

Last, but not least, is a warning about being careful about pesticides. Do not spray the flowers for pests least you would kill the bugs that are the hummingbirds protein or the bird would ingest to much that would make it sick or

die. These simple rules or thoughts should make you have a wonderful spring and summer enjoying one of natures exciting gifts, The Hummingbird.