

HOW TO ATTRACT HUMMINGBIRDS by Gail Wisdom

Last week my husband and I thoroughly enjoyed watching two very tiny hummingbirds in our backyard. They were feeding on maroon and purple vinca flowers. They are such a wonder to watch. Their feeding activity is quite entertaining and would be great to photograph.

According to Texas Parks and Wildlife, there are eighteen various species of Hummingbirds found in Texas. For more information follow this link www.tpwd.state.tx.us and then search Hummingbird identification: photos.

Hummingbirds get the energy they need to maintain their high metabolism primarily from flower nectar. Therefore the best way to enjoy the presence of Hummingbirds is to plant a Hummer garden. Although flowers provide a natural diet, you may also want to supplement by hanging nearby feeders. You can either buy the nectar for your feeder or make your own by mixing 1 part white cane sugar to 4 parts water. Then heat in a microwave for three minutes. Store in a refrigerator and change the nectar in the feeder every two weeks.

Hummers have no sense of smell so they are attracted to color, not scent. Provide nectar-producing plants that have trumpet shaped blooms.

When choosing plants for a Hummingbird garden think native. Choose several different varieties so that the plants will flower successively to provide a food source all season long. (See suggestions below)

The nectar that your garden provides for Hummers gives them energy to catch insects. They feed on insects as a source of protein, vitamins and minerals. Therefore it is important to avoid insecticides anywhere near your Hummingbird garden.

Water is also required for refreshment, bathing and drinking. Drip hoses and misters are best suited for these tiny creatures. If using a birdbath, make sure that the water level is very shallow and change it every day to avoid mosquitoes.

Here is a short list of recommended plants to attract hummingbirds.

Trees and Shrubs – Lantana, Sage, Butterfly Bush, Turk's Cap, Mimosa

Vines – Morning Glory, Coral Honeysuckle, Trumpet Creeper, Cypress Vine

Flowers – Red Yucca, Sages & Salvias, Four O'Clocks, Bee Balm, Penstemon,

Please go to www.wildflower.org, click on "Explore Plants" and scroll to the bottom of the page and click on Hummingbirds Plants for Central Texas for a more detailed list.

If you have gardening questions please email us at wichitamg@mail.com, also visit our website overthegardengate.org

Good luck and enjoy one of Nature's wonders. Now get out and garden.