

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry
“Attracting Hummingbirds to Your Garden”

Hummingbirds’ jet-like speed, fussy chatter and aerial acrobatics can entertain us for hours. Encourage these dynamic little birds to your garden by providing clean water and layers of dense shrubs, like Eleagnus, for nesting sites. A chemical-free environment is necessary, as well. Hummingbirds eat nectar for energy and insects for protein. You can supplement their need for nectar with sugar water.

You will need a hummingbird feeder, a pan, and 1 cup of water and 1/4 cup of sugar. Place sugar and water in the pan and bring just to a boil and stir, then cool. Bringing the water to a boil will help to remove chlorine from the water and kill mold and yeast spores that might be in the sugar. Adding red dye to the sugar water solution is not necessary or healthy for hummingbirds. Cleanliness is a must; change the sugar solution if it becomes cloudy or contaminated with ants.

When temperatures are in the 70’s the solution can be changed every 6-7 days. Temperatures in the high 90’s may require daily solution changes.

The best for the hummingbirds is to plant nectar rich plants rather than just have feeders.

Select and plant those bird attracting perennials now for next year.

Hummingbirds like nectar rich blooms of any color- not just red ones.

Make your garden a magnet for hummingbirds by selecting plants with brightly colored, long, tube-shaped flowers. Vines like Coral Honeysuckle, Cypress Vine, Texas Cross Vine and Morning Glory will attract these tiny birds. Trees such as Desert Willow, Redbud, Crabapple, and Red Buckeye and the shrubs Flame Acanthus, Turk’s Cap, Rose of Sharon, Bottlebrush and Abelia are good additions to a hummingbird garden. Columbine, Agastache, Bee Balm, Canna, Coral Bells, Hosta, Red Yucca, Cigar Plant, Gay Feather, Mexican Honeysuckle, Penstemon, Plumbago, Salvia Greggii, Lantana, Texas Bethany, Cedar Sage, Butterfly Bush, Century Plant, Fire Bush and Ajuga are dependable perennials loved by hummingbirds. Annuals, such as Petunias, Impatiens, Begonias and Geraniums will attract hummingbirds. Having pots of these on your deck will give you a bird’s eye view of these fascinating “hummers.”

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

In the photo: Brightly colored, tube-shaped blooms of plants like Turk's Cap, Mexican Bush Sage, Fire Bush and Shrimp Plant will provide nectar for hummingbirds in your garden. These easy to grow plants are drought tolerant and deer resistant.

