

## ***Attracting and Caring for Hummingbirds in Oklahoma***

Hummingbirds are enchanting creatures that bring joy and beauty to any garden. Attracting and caring for these delightful birds requires a blend of understanding their needs, providing suitable habitats, and selecting the right plants. Oklahoma is blessed with a variety of hummingbird species, including the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, and Rufous Hummingbird, among others. Here is how you can create a haven for these aerial wonders in your own backyard.

### **Understanding Hummingbirds**

Hummingbirds are not just attracted to any garden. They are drawn to specific elements that cater to their unique lifestyle. These tiny birds have incredibly high metabolisms and need to consume substantial amounts of nectar to fuel their energy. Additionally, they feed on small insects and spiders for essential proteins and nutrients. Oklahoma's hummingbirds typically start arriving in April and May from their wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America, making this period an exciting time for bird enthusiasts.

### **Creating a Hummingbird-Friendly Habitat**

To attract hummingbirds, it is crucial to design a habitat that meets their needs. Here are some key considerations:

**1. Plant Selection:** Choose a variety of flowering plants that provide nectar-rich blooms. Native species such as trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*), coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), and bee balm (*Monarda* spp.) are excellent choices for Oklahoma gardens. These plants not only

supply nectar but also attract insects that hummingbirds rely on for protein.

**2. Color and Shape:** Hummingbirds are especially attracted to red, orange, and pink flowers with tubular shapes, as these colors and forms resemble their favorite nectar sources. Incorporate plants like salvia (*Salvia* spp.), penstemon (*Penstemon* spp.), and columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) to provide a diverse palette of enticing blooms.

**3. Shelter and Perches:** Hummingbirds need places to rest and perch between feeding flights. Incorporate trees and shrubs with dense foliage for shelter and include small perches such as thin branches or trellises where hummingbirds can rest and survey their territory.

**4. Water Feature:** Install a shallow birdbath or fountain with moving water. Hummingbirds are attracted to the sound and sparkle of water, and they will appreciate having a reliable water source for drinking and bathing.

## **Caring for Hummingbirds**

Once you have attracted hummingbirds to your garden, it is essential to provide ongoing care to ensure their well-being:

**1. Feeder Maintenance:** If using hummingbird feeders, keep them clean and fill them with fresh sugar water (1 part sugar to 4 parts water) without the use of red dye. Clean the feeders regularly to prevent mold and bacteria buildup.

**2. Avoid Pesticides:** Minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides in your garden, as these chemicals can harm hummingbirds directly or reduce their food supply by eliminating insects.

**3. Seasonal Care:** Continue to provide nectar sources throughout the growing season. In late summer and fall, include plants that bloom later, such as Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) and autumn sage (*Salvia greggii*), to sustain hummingbirds as they prepare for migration.

**4. Education and Observation:** Learn about the hummingbird species in your area and observe their behaviors. Understanding their habits will enable you to fine-tune your garden to better suit their needs.

Attracting and caring for hummingbirds in Oklahoma is a rewarding endeavor that enriches both the garden and the soul. By creating a hummingbird-friendly habitat with the right plants, water features, and minimal chemical interference, you can invite these magnificent birds to grace your outdoor space with their vibrant presence. Remember, patience and attentiveness are key as you embark on this journey to nurture and enjoy these remarkable aerial acrobats in your own backyard. Happy gardening and happy hummingbird watching!

## **References**

[https://extension.okstate.edu/articles/2024/hummingbirds\\_arriving\\_soon.html](https://extension.okstate.edu/articles/2024/hummingbirds_arriving_soon.html)

<https://extension.okstate.edu/programs/gardening/grow-gardening-columns/grow-columns-2020/may-10-2020-hummingbirds.html>