

Love Those Hummers!!!

My first encounter with a hummingbird happened MANY years ago. I was about three and we met nose to “nose” on my front porch. That encounter began my lifelong fascination with these amazing creatures.

Some interesting hummingbird facts:

- These tiny, energetic acrobats are the smallest native birds in North America. They measure about 3-½ “long and weigh about ¼ oz.
- The humming sound as they fly by, or hover is caused by the rapid movement of their wings at roughly 55 beats per second.
- Their heartrate is 1,260 beats per minute; their breath-rate is 250 breaths per minute.
- For its size, a hummingbird’s energy consumption surpasses all other warm-blooded creatures on earth. They require sustenance every 15 minutes to survive.
- They are unable to fly if their body temperature falls below 86°F
- They cannot continue to feed at night. So, they must be able to store up enough protein and carbs or go into a dormancy period called torpor in order to survive. Torpid periods will drastically reduce their nutritional requirements.
- Hummers cannot survive on nectar alone and must rely on small insects trapped in the sticky nectar from flowers for their protein source.

By far, the most common hummer found in Oklahoma is the Ruby-throated hummingbird but, on occasion, the Rufous hummingbird makes an appearance. Very rarely, the Black-Chinned and Broad-Tailed hummingbirds can be seen in the western part of the state. Interestingly, the Ruby-throated hummingbird migrates 2,000 miles or

more, individually rather than in flocks or small groups. 500 of those miles are over the Gulf of Mexico. To survive the journey, the hummer must build up one-half its body weight in fat.

When designing a hummingbird garden, supplement your plantings that attract hummingbirds with nectar feeders (see list below). Hummers are very territorial and protective, so place several feeders at a distance from each other, as they do tiff! Use feeders that have bee and wasp guards. Most feeders have red on them to get the hummer's attention which makes it unnecessary to add red food coloring to the nectar. And it may actually be harmful.

To make nectar, add one part of granulated sugar to four parts boiling water. Let cool before filling feeders. Do not use honey or sugar substitute. Clean feeders 2 to 3 times a week. Wash with a solution of one tablespoon of white vinegar to one cup of water. Rinse thoroughly with warm water.

Hummingbird Favorites

Shrubs

- Abelia
- Azalea
- Spirea
- Weigela

Vines and Ground Covers

- Coral Bean
- Morning Glory
- Scarlet Runner Bean

Herbaceous Plants

- Bee Balm
- Butterfly Weed
- Canna
- Cardinal Flower
- Columbine
- Coral Bells
- Evening Primrose
- Fire Pink
- Four O'clock
- Foxglove
- Fuchsia
- Gentian
- Hollyhock
- Impatiens
- Indian Paintbrush
- Larkspur
- Lupine
- Mint
- Nicotiana
- Penstemon
- Petunia
- Phlox
- Primrose
- Red Hot Poker
- Sage
- Sweet William

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