



Rubythroated
Archilochus colubris

Attracting Hummingbirds To The Garden

Many newcomers to Florida gardening are disappointed in their attempts to attract hummingbirds since many other parts of the country have numbers of species and large populations. In Florida we have only one species that is resident here and many of these also migrate south for the winter.

The Ruby-Throated Hummingbird is normally seen throughout the spring and summer and a number of plant species are particularly sought after by these tiny birds. We also experience some "accidental" occurrences as species not normally found here wander through Florida during their normal migration south. These include the Rufous Hummingbird, Black-Chinned Hummingbird, Cuban Emeralds and Bahama Woodstar.

Hummingbirds live primarily on nectar from flowers as well as small insects and spiders. They normally feed as they hover on the wing, their tiny wings beating so fast they cannot be seen. Because of their fast metabolic rate, they must eat a great deal so will frequently stay in your garden for a while if they find a suitable food source.

They nest in Florida during the summer, building tiny cup-like nests out of lichens, lining it with various kinds of plant fibers and down. Two tiny eggs the size of peas are produced. Males may be distinguished from females by a bright red patch of feathers under the throat while females and immature have gray throats.

In Florida we have a very large sphinx moth that is often confused with hummingbirds. These moths have long pointed mouthparts that let them pump nectar from the base of a tubular flower. They are as large as hummingbirds (3-3.5 inches) and feed in the same way, hovering in front of the flower with rapidly beating wings. These moths are normally nocturnal so are usually only seen at dusk. Both the moths and the hummingbirds are important pollinators.

Hummingbird feeders are available and useful where large populations are found but at Biosphere we do not recommend using feeders because of the rapid spoilage of the nectar and the real chance of causing disease with feeders that have mold or fungus growing in the food.

In central Florida, one of the favorite flowers sought after by hummingbirds is the Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*). The tubular red flowers always attract any hummingbird in the vicinity and this native vine is hardy with a long blooming period. Other plants sought after by Hummingbirds are listed on this flyer.



Recommended Plants for Attracting Hummingbirds in Central Florida

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| <i>Agastache</i> spp. | Agastache |
| <i>Antirrhinum</i> spp. | Snapdragon |
| <i>Aquelegia canadensis</i> | Native Columbine (N) |
| <i>Asclepias</i> sp. | Milkweeds (N) |
| <i>Bignonia capreolata</i> | Crossvine (N) |
| <i>Buddleia davidii</i> | Butterfly Bush |
| <i>Calliandra</i> spp. | Powderpuff |
| <i>Callistemon lanceolatus</i> | Bottlebrush |
| <i>Campsis radicans</i> | Trumpet Creeper Vine (N) |
| <i>Cleome</i> spp. | Spiderflower |
| <i>Cuphea</i> spp. | Candy Corn, Starfire, Cigar Plant |
| <i>Dianthus barbatus</i> | Sweet William |
| <i>Erythrina herbacea</i> | Coral Bean (N) |
| <i>Gloxinia sellovii</i> | Hardy Red Gloxinia |
| <i>Gloxinia sylvatica</i> | Bolivian Sunset |
| <i>Hamelia patens</i> | Firebush (N) |
| <i>Iochroma cyaneum</i> | Skyflower Bush |
| <i>Ipomopsis rubra</i> | Standing Cypress (N) |
| <i>Justicia</i> sp. | Shrimp Plant (red and yellow) |
| <i>Leonotis leonurus</i> | Lion's Mane |
| <i>Lobelia cardinalis</i> | Cardinalflower (N) |
| <i>Lonicera sempervirens</i> | Coral Honeysuckle |
| <i>Malvaviscus</i> sp. | Turks Cap (red) |
| <i>Monarda punctata</i> | Dotted Horsemint (N) |
| <i>Nicotiana</i> spp. | Flowering Tobacco |
| <i>Odontonema cuspidate</i> | Firespike |
| <i>Pachystachys coccinea</i> | Cardinals Guard |
| <i>Penstemon</i> spp. | Penstemons |
| <i>Pentas lanceolata</i> | Tall Red Pentas |
| <i>Phlox</i> spp. | Phlox |
| <i>Salvia</i> spp. | Salvias (sages) |
| <i>Stachytarpheta</i> spp. | Porterweeds |
| <i>Tecomaria capensis</i> | Cape Honeysuckle |
| <i>Tithonia rotundifolia</i> | Mexican Sunflower |
| <i>Verbena bonariensis</i> | Verbena |
| <i>Veronica</i> | Speedwell |

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Nursery open to the public, Tuesday - Saturday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.