

GROW Crazy!

Constantly moving, never tired, always hungry and searching for sugar, that is one way to describe my toddler and his preschool class, but also the best-known characteristics of the ruby throated hummingbird. These tiny birds visit our gardens and fascinate adults and children alike.

As the smallest birds in the world, and weighing just a few grams, these flitting fliers migrate north and south across the continent every spring and fall stopping and staying at the best back yard restaurants on their holiday road. Hummingbirds need to eat an average of seven times per hour so it should be easy to entice them into our own flower-filled yards.

With the absence of a Zagat's Guide to eating for hummingbirds, add these key ingredients to your yard to create the five-star dining experience they are looking for.

1) Mix It Up- Everyone likes variety in their diet so plant your garden with that in mind. Flowering perennials that bloom at overlapping times are essential, but they should be mixed with continuous blooming annual flowers to provide a steady supply of nectar.

2) Sound the Trumpets- Hummingbirds have virtually no sense of smell and are attracted to flowers by color and nectar production. Plant flowers with trumpet-shaped blooms like Penstemon, Honeysuckle and Trumpet vine; Bee balm is also a favorite. Make sure to include vibrant colors like rich purple salvia and



Wallace's Garden Center
Garden Girl

Kate Terrell

scarlet red Cardinal Flower.

3) Keep it Cool- The summer heat affects us all, even birds. Add a clear water feeder and/or birdbath for hummingbirds to cool off and get a drink.

4) Hang it Up- Many flowers go in and out of bloom or close at night, but providing a feeder with nectar will ensure that there is always something to eat. I like feeders that have a glass vessel, wasp guards and a built in ant moat to keep pesky ants from taking over. Feeders should be cleaned with hot, soapy water at least once per week and nectar solutions changed out frequently, and especially when it turns from clear to cloudy.

5) Take Out or Homemade? – Hummingbirds prefer flowers but won't turn up their beaks at the nectar in a feeder. You can buy it pre-made, as a concentrate or simply make your own with a simple mix of sugar and water. Mix four parts water to one part sugar, boil, cool, and fill your feeders.

Creating a hummer-friendly garden is an easy way to see hummingbirds up close, and a good way to keep the sugar outside and away from the kids.



The Nectar-rich flowers of bee balm are a hummingbird favorite.



The simple trumpet shape of annual petunias are ideal for feeding.



Hummingbirds surround & drink from a feeder.

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