

Attracting Hummingbirds to East Tennessee Gardens

Hummingbirds like to have trees and shrubs in which to perch, to sit and preen, and to nest.

They also enjoy bathing in a shallow pool. Add a smooth river rock or two to the birdbath to create layers of depth. They also love to fly through a fine mist of water, as do many other birds. Garden misters are available for this purpose from specialty vendors.

Hummingbirds make tiny nests. Plants are the best source of nesting material. Cinnamon, Royal and other ferns, and fine textured native grasses are favorites.

Hummingbirds will come to feeders, but be sure to keep the feeder clean and stocked with fresh medium. A better alternative is to include lots of hummingbird friendly plants in your landscape.

Hummingbirds feed on the nectar of flowers with tubular shapes, and pick tiny insects out of other flowers. They do NOT feed exclusively on red flowers. Many hummingbird flowers are red because red is not seen particularly well by bees. In my observation, hummingbirds will feed on flowers of any color, and their absolute favorite in my garden happens to be blue.

Hummingbird Plants that Do Well in East Tennessee

Salvias *Blue Brazilian Sage Lady in Red Sage Pineapple Sage Mexican Bush Sage Autumn Sage	These are the ultimate hummingbird plants, and look great in the landscape, too. Most are not hardy here, but can be grown as annuals to great effect. Blue Brazilian Sage is our hummingbirds' favorite, and does survive our winters for most gardeners. All the salvias will bloom all season once they start. These plants are not native to our area, but they are native in the range of our hummingbirds.
Penstemons	A group of plants that seems to be designed just for hummingbirds. Several types available, both native and non-native.
Monardas	Bee Balm, Wild Bergamot, and other relations. Native.
Zinnias	Hummingbirds frequent these for the insects.
Trumpet Creeper	Probably the most important regionally native nectar source for hummingbirds. Too rampant a grower for most landscapes.
Red Buckeye, and other buckeyes	An important regionally native source of nectar in the early spring. Grows in full sun to deciduous shade, with different growth habits in each condition.
Cardinal Flower	Beautiful native for gardens.
Columbine	Early spring bloomer. Prefers partial shade.
Bleeding Heart	The native blooms all summer in full to partial shade. Great little plant.
Heucheras	For shade to partial sun. Available in a wide range of leaf colors, too.
Native Honeysuckle	Just made for hummingbirds! Long season of bloom. Trumpet Honeysuckle is a good choice for sun to partial shade. Not invasive.
Cross Vine	A great native vine. Blooms tend to be too high to see from the ground.
Summersweet	Wonderful native shrub that hummingbirds will frequent to gather tiny insects. My personal favorite is Ruby Spice, a lovely cultivar with gem toned blooms. The species tends to be white.

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