



Specializing in plants
that thrive in Central Ohio

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Hummingbird Feeders

Feeders are a great way to attract hummingbirds to your gardens. There are some risks when using feeders so be sure to read the below paragraphs on Avoiding Feeding Risks, so that your hummingbirds will be a continuation of your garden landscape for years to come!

Avoid Feeding Risks

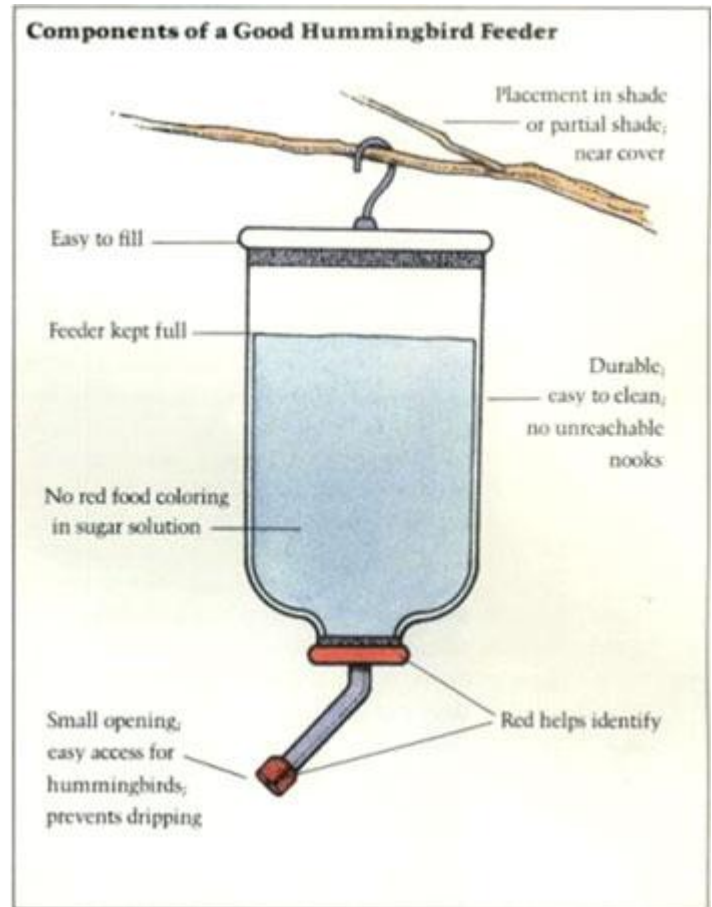
From time to time mixtures other than sugar water have been proposed for feeding hummingbirds. All of them present unacceptable risks. This is especially true of honey-water mixtures. Not only is honey an unnatural food for hummingbirds, but it spoils much more quickly than sugar water and contains a bacteria that causes a fungal disease on the tongue. The disease is always fatal.

White sugar, on the other hand, is a sucrose sugar like the sucrose in flower nectar. The strength of 1 part sugar to 4 parts water closely approximates the strength of flower nectar. Stronger concentrations have been found to adversely affect the liver of captive birds; weaker concentrations are less attractive to the hummingbirds.

Other mixtures that are unsafe and that should be avoided are those made with artificial sweeteners and those that contain nutritional additives. Hummingbirds supplement their nectar diet with foods they find in the wild, therefore protein supplements are unnecessary; they are also potentially harmful.

The same is true of red food coloring. An artificial dye, red food coloring is often added to mixtures so that hummingbirds, with their well-known affinity for red, will quickly be attracted to the feeder. The safety of red dye has been questioned in regard to its use in foods for human consumption. Nearly all commercial feeders already are decorated with red plastic flowers or tinted with red. Therefore, the addition of red food coloring is unnecessary as well as potentially harmful. Once hummingbirds discover a feeder, they continue to come to it regardless of its color.

- Feeders should be placed outside for arriving hummingbirds in mid-late April; and should left up through September.
- Place feeders within 10-15 feet of cover plants (trees, shrubs, and vines)
- Once you start feeding hummingbirds you should continue every year after; hummingbirds will return each year expecting you reliable food source!
- Place near nectar producing plants to help hummingbirds find your feeders; you can move them later if needed.
- Placing feeders in shade helps to keep your solution from spoiling rapidly.
- You can use ready to mix solutions or you can make your own (see recipe below)
- Clean your feeder(s) every 3 days in hot weather; 6-7 days in cool weather. See cleaning details below)
- Use bee guards or slippery substances; such as petroleum jelly, salad oil, or mineral oil to keep unwanted pests from your feeders.
- Do Not Use Pesticides to control unwanted pests. The hummingbird and small insects they need for food could be adversely affected.



Preparing A Syrup Solution:

- If you wish to make your own hummingbird solution, use the recipe below (taken from the Ortho Book, How to Attract Hummingbirds & Butterflies) - Do not substitute any ingredients.
- The standard syrup solution for feeding hummingbirds consists of 1 part white sugar to 4 parts water.
- Begin by stirring the sugar into the water
- Bring the solution to a boil over low heat-two minutes is long enough
- Boiling is important as it kills mold spores and bacteria and, through evaporation, reduces any chlorine or fluorine that may be in the water. Prolonged boiling is unnecessary-over boiling will remove too much water, making the solution stronger than a 1:4 ratio.



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- After the solution has been allowed to cool, it is ready to be placed in the feeders.
- Refrigerate if any excess solution for future use.

Cleaning Your Feeders:

Feeders should be cleaned every 3 days in hot weather and every 6-7 days in cool weather. Leaving your solution for any longer can give a cloudy appearance (a closer inspection would show harmful mold/bacteria beginning to form on the inside of your feeder.

This harmful bacteria & mold present health risks to hummingbirds & could kill them

- Empty leftover solution and rinse with warm water before refilling
- If mold has already begun to form you will need to clean more thoroughly:
- Mix vinegar, uncooked rice and hot water in feeder
- Shake vigorously to loosen mold
- Rinse well with warm water
- If mold remains you will need to use a bottle brush, or other scrubbing device, to thoroughly scrub all molded areas.
- Rinse again and repeat until all mold is removed.

**It is always a good idea to start with a small amount of solution in your feeders, so that you do not waste too much when it comes time to refill with a clean batch.*