

Time to Put Out the Hummingbird Feeders

While Christmas shopping last December, my girls found a store dedicated to bird watchers. Yep, a whole store with nothing but feeders, nest boxes and lots of bird feed. Bird watching has become big business.

If you like to watch hummingbirds, then it's time, if you haven't already done so, to put up the hummingbird feeders.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources really suggests leaving feeders up year round because at times we have several other species of hummingbirds that can pass through our area. Out of all the different species – eleven different species to be exact that we can see here – the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird is the most common and is actually the only species that is known to nest in Georgia.

Hummingbirds come to feeders that are bright red in color so make sure that the feeders you put up have a lot of red on them. It's really not good to mix red food coloring into the sugar-water solution that you make up to feed them. The red color on the feeder is enough to attract them and we suggest that you mix up a clear solution of sugar and water to feed them.

A simple hummingbird food solution recipe is to mix 1 part sugar with 4 parts water. Boil the water on the stove for about 2 or 3 minutes before adding the sugar and then stir until the sugar completely dissolves. Cool the mixture down and fill up your feeders and store the leftover solution in the refrigerator for refilling.

It's important to keep your hummingbird feeder solution fresh in your feeders. Change the solution every three or four days or for sure change it when the solution begins to look cloudy and not clear. The hotter the temperatures the more often you should change the solution.

Ants and yellow jackets can become a nuisance problem on hummingbird feeders especially during the hot dry periods in the summer. You might want to try and buy feeders with bee guards on them that prevent bees and yellow jackets from getting into the feeder. Another remedy is to smear Vaseline (petroleum jelly) on the wire above the feeder to keep ants from crawling down the wire to the feeder. Yellow jackets can also be trapped using yellow jacket traps that can be found at many garden center outlets.

Hummingbirds feed on nectar in blooms and they feed on many of our flowers, shrubs, and trees that we have growing in our landscape areas. The following is a partial list of some of the more common plants that attract hummingbirds:

Annual & perennial flowers: Lantana, petunias, zinnias, daylilies, geraniums, phlox, salvia, impatiens, coreopsis, sunflowers, canna lilies, & gladiolus.

Ornamental Shrubs: Rose of Sharon, hibiscus, azaleas, honeysuckle, butterfly bush, abelia, & weigela.

Trees: Redbud, mimosa, crabapple, tulip poplar, chaste tree, black locust, and maple.

Vines: Cypress vine, jasmine, trumpet creeper, morning glory, and coral vine.