



Understanding Hummingbirds

Aspect	Description
Tiny Size	Among the smallest birds, some weigh less than a dime, optimized for rapid and precise movements.
Flight	Capable of hovering and flying backward, with wingbeat speeds up to 80 beats per second.
Metabolism	One of the highest metabolic rates in the animal kingdom, requiring constant energy intake.
Migration	Undertake long migrations, with some flying 500 miles non-stop during seasonal journeys.
Senses	Acute vision for UV light and impressive memory for revisiting feeding sites.
Diet	Primarily nectar but supplemented with insects and arachnids for protein intake.
Distribution	Found exclusively in the Americas, with over 300 species in diverse habitats.
Unique Features	Iridescent plumage and fiercely territorial behavior enhance their mystique.



Hummingbird’s Diet and Feeding Habits

Nutritional Component	Description
Nectar	The primary source of energy; rich in sugars to support their rapid metabolism and high-energy lifestyle.
Protein	Sourced from insects, spiders, and small arthropods; critical for muscle development and overall nutrition.
Feeding Patterns	Multiple quick feedings daily; territorial behavior ensures consistent access to food sources.
Seasonal Variations	Diet shifts depending on breeding, migration, or resource availability during environmental transitions.



Attracting Hummingbirds to Your Backyard

Key Strategy	Summary
Planting the Right Flowers	Choose tubular flowers in red, orange, and pink colors for their high appeal to hummingbirds. Native plants, such as trumpet vine and bee balm in eastern regions or penstemon and salvia in western regions, offer abundant nectar and support local ecosystems. Plan for succession blooms to provide nectar from spring through fall, and place flowers at varying heights to accommodate different hummingbird behaviors.
Hummingbird Feeders	Select feeders with red components to attract hummingbirds, and avoid yellow accents that attract bees. Place feeders 4-6 feet above the ground in predator-safe areas. Use a nectar recipe of one part sugar to four parts water and clean feeders regularly to prevent contamination.
Adding Water Sources	Offer shallow water sources or use misters, drippers, and solar-powered fountains to create gentle movement that attracts hummingbirds. Place water sources near perching spots and ensure clear flight paths for safety and easy access.
Using Bright Colors	Use warm tones like red, orange, and pink to catch the attention of hummingbirds. Incorporate these colors in flowers, decorative items, and feeders while avoiding muted or camouflaging hues.
Shelter and Nesting Sites	Plant shrubs, small trees, or dense bushes to provide hiding spots and nesting opportunities. Incorporate plants like willow or birch and offer shelters at varying heights. Maintain open spaces for flight and avoid disturbing active nests to ensure the birds feel secure.

Other

Avoid pesticides to prevent contaminating food sources.

Considerations

Maintain a clean, vibrant environment to ensure hummingbirds feel safe and well-supported throughout the season.



Sample Plant List for Hummingbirds

Plant Name	Bloom Time	Sun / Shade	Notes
Coral Honeysuckle	March–July	Sun/Part Shade	Native, tubular flowers
Cardinal Flower	July–October	Sun/Part Shade	Prefers moist soil
Bee Balm (Monarda)	June–September	Sun/Part Shade	Attracts insects too
Penstemon	Spring–Summer	Sun	Drought-tolerant
Salvia	Spring–Fall	Sun	Many varieties
Fuchsia	Late Spring–Fall	Shade/Partial	Good for containers
Firecracker Plant	Summer–Fall	Sun	Loved by many species
Liatris	August–November	Sun/Part Shade	Tall spikes, late bloom



Maintaining a Hummingbird-Friendly Environment

Category	Details
Seasonal Care	Spring Preparation: Prepare before hummingbirds arrive by cleaning feeders, pruning plants, checking water features, and planting early-blooming flowers (e.g., flowering quince, azaleas). Summer Maintenance: Deadhead flowers, clean feeders regularly, ensure fresh water, and replace nectar more frequently during hot weather. Fall Activities: Continue feeding migratory hummingbirds and allow some flowers to go to seed to support insects they eat. Winter Preparation: Northern areas should store equipment and plan for next year, while southern regions maintain feeders year-round for residents or winter visitors.
Pest and Predator Control	Protect from cats: Keep cats indoors or use enclosed outdoor areas; install motion-activated sprinklers. Prevent window strikes: Add decals, ribbons, or screens to windows and place feeders either close (within 3 feet) or far from windows (beyond 10 feet). Address insect competition: Use ant moats and feeders with bee guards. Manage praying mantis risks: Relocate mantises if they pose a threat near feeders.
Avoiding Harmful Chemicals	Integrated Pest Management: Use natural methods like encouraging beneficial insects to control pests. Plant Native Flowers and Shrubs: Incorporate native plants to provide nectar and attract insects for a balanced hummingbird diet. Avoid Harsh Fertilizers: Avoid chemicals that harm soil chemistry and nectar-producing flowers.

Create a Pesticide-Free Habitat:

Cultivate a diverse, chemical-free garden to support both pollinators and the broader ecosystem.



The Behavior of Hummingbirds

Behavior	Description
Hovering Mid-Air	The ability to sustain a stationary position in mid-air using rapid wing movement in a figure-eight motion to aid in feeding.
Territorial Protection	Defending feeding areas through aerial displays and vocalization to secure resources.
Speed and Precision	Flight capabilities with remarkable speed, agility, and accuracy, including courtship dives over 50 mph.
Perching	Resting between activities to conserve energy, monitor surroundings, and digest food.
Courtship	Performing intricate and energetic displays to attract mates, often highlighted by iridescent plumage.
Other Behaviors	Exhibiting memory retention, cooperative feeding habits, and adaptability to environmental changes through torpor.