



Hummingbird Garden Requirements and Plant List

Requirements

Size: The size of a hummingbird garden is variable.

Light: Full sun should be available for six or more hours each day during the growing season.

Water: Once established, native plants require no additional watering.

Elevation/Topography: The ground should be flat or slightly sloped. Protection from the wind should be provided, although hummingbirds are strong fliers capable of moving forward, backward, up, down and hovering.

Soil: Loose, well drained loam soil is preferred, although native plants can be selected for most soils and moisture levels.

Plant Materials: Native plants are recommended. Hummingbirds are especially attracted to tubular-shaped flowers in red and orange hues. Plan for continuous blooming throughout the summer to keep the birds coming to your garden. They are fearless and will happily feed close to the school, so you may want to locate your garden so it can be easily seen from your classroom. Hummingbirds also need insects in their diet, so providing plants that attract insects is a thoughtful addition to the hummingbird garden. See Plant List.

Planting and Maintenance: Follow the guidelines given on the Web page, “How to Plant and Maintain Native Plants.” <https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/PlantListMaintain.aspx>. Nectar plants should be planted in masses (clumps) as opposed to rows or randomly, as hummingbirds are attracted by color.

Special Considerations

Feeders: Hummingbirds readily visit feeders filled with a solution of white sugar and water (one cup sugar to four cups water). Do not use brown sugar or red food coloring.

Diet: Besides nectar, hummingbirds also need protein to build body mass, especially in preparation for their long migration to Mexico and Central America. Insects are the main source.

Sound: Hummingbirds do not sing, but will “chatter” and buzz to communicate. Their wings flap 50-60 times per second, creating a “humming” noise.

Spider Webs: Believe it or not, spider webs can be harmful to hummingbirds, causing injury or even death. Hummingbirds weigh two to three grams (equivalent to the weight of three paperclips) and when caught in a web, may expend much energy trying to escape. Watch for webs in or near your hummingbird garden.

Plant List for Dry Soil

butterfly-weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
downy phlox (*Phlox pilosa*)
foxglove beardstongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)
hoary vervain (*Verbena stricta*)
New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*)
prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)
azure aster (*Symphotrichum oolentangiense*)
wild petunia (*Ruellia humilis*)

Plant List for Medium Soil

butterfly-weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)
foxglove beardstongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)
New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*)
prairie blazing-star (*Liatris pycnostachya*)
prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)
purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
royal catchfly (*Silene regia*)
smooth aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*)
wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)

Plant List for Moist Soil

blue iris (*Iris shrevei*)
cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
foxglove beardstongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)
great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)
smooth phlox (*Phlox glaberrima*)
monkey-flower (*Mimulus ringens*)
muskingum sedge (*Carex muskingumensis*)
prairie blazing-star (*Liatris pycnostachya*)