

Make a Hummingbird Feeder

By Marta K. Nelson

Inviting hummingbirds to your home is as simple as hanging a feeder. Put them where you can see them easily, but out of the sun and wind. Since hummingbirds spend a lot of their time perching, having shrubs, trees or flowers close by also will encourage them to visit your feeder. It helps to have more than one feeder, since one male will chase away all other hummingbirds from a single feeder, but he can't defend two or three at a time.



Here's what you'll need:

- Small glass jar with a screw-on cap (baby food jars work well)
- Hammer and a 10 penny nail or an electric drill with $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch bit
- Bright red and yellow enamel paint, a brush, or a paint pen (these can be found in craft stores or the toy section of department stores near the plastic model supplies)
- Scissors
- Heavy string

Instructions (Adult supervision may be necessary for some steps.)

1. Clean and dry the jar and lid.
2. Make an $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch hole in the lid using the hammer and nail or a drill. (Dull the sharp points around the hole by hammering them down from the other side. You may need to repeat the process to achieve the proper size hole.)
3. Paint the lid red. It may need a few coats to get a bright red color. Let it dry well between the coats. It works well to paint a small yellow flower around the nail hole. An alternate design is to make a series of these holes painting the yellow flower shapes around each one. You may also want to decorate your feeder by painting flowers on the side of the jar in red and yellow.

4. Assemble your feeder by first tying a length of string around the neck of the jar tightly. Then fill it almost full with hummingbird nectar (recipe follows), and screw on the painted jar lid tightly.
5. Now you're ready to hang up your very own hummingbird feeder.

Caring for your feeder

It is absolutely vital that feeders are kept filled and clean. You should wash and refill them every other day, especially in warm weather. Until you have several hummingbirds visiting your feeder, it is not necessary to fill your feeder to the top. Use smaller amounts to begin with.

When to use your feeder

Hummingbirds generally begin arriving in mid-April, so that's a good time to have your feeders up and ready. Leaving your feeder up until the end of October will help birds that live north of us get a quick, high-energy snack to help them along the way. It's not true that leaving your feeder up will tempt the hummingbirds to stay too long. Migration is triggered by the changing day length, not the availability of food.

Hummingbird Nectar recipe

Here's what you'll need:

- One cup sugar (Never use honey. Honey can make hummingbirds sick.)
- Four cups water
- A medium-sized saucepan
- Container for storage

Instructions

1. Ask an adult for help with the stove. Put the water in the saucepan, and cook it on the stove until it boils.
2. Add the sugar, and stir the mixture until it boils again. Boiling helps keep the mixture fresh longer. Make sure the mixture is cool before using it in your feeder. Store what's left in the refrigerator.
3. It's not necessary to add red food coloring, as long as some part of the feeder itself is red. Some people wonder if all that sugar can be good for the birds. Actually, this recipe is similar to the nectar naturally found in flowers.