

Put Some Humm Into Your Garden



Hummingbirds are often likened to “flying flowers”; however it takes 1000-2000 genuine, nectar-rich flowers plus numerous tiny insects daily to keep a hummingbird aloft. Found only in the Western Hemisphere, hummers consume the nectar of many California native plants including manzanita, buckeye, sage, and penstemon. In Tuolumne County, Anna hummers can be found year round with Rufous mostly during the spring and fall migration. I also have many Black-chinned hummers in my Sonora garden. And, Costas and Calliopes are occasionally sighted in the county. In some cases, hummingbird range has been extended, probably due to artificial nectar feeders (a boon during tough times if kept scrupulously clean and replenished), at the same time habitat destruction has reduced native plant sources.

Gardeners therefore can be a hummingbird’s best friend. To create a true hummingbird haven, grow several of the following trees, shrubs and perennials. Aim for a wide variety of flowers over a long period including early and late bloomers. Check *Sunset Western Garden Book* (SWGB) for cold tolerances and growing conditions.

- . Abutilon (flowering maple)
- . Agapanthus (lily of the Nile)
- . Albizia julibrissin (silk tree)
- . Agastache (hummingbird mint, giant hyssop)
- . Aquilegia (columbine)
- . Arctostaphylos (manzanita)
- . Buddleia (butterfly bush)
- . Callistemon (bottle brush)
- . Campsis (trumpet vine)
- . Dicliptera suberecta*
- . Digitalis (foxgloxe)
- . Echeveria (hens and chicks)
- . Epilobium, formerly Zauschneria
(California fuchsia)
- . Escallonia
- . Grevillea ‘Canberra’ and G.
‘Constance’ (rebloomers); G. ‘Noellii’
(spring bloom only)

- . Heuchera (coral bells)
- . Hibiscus syriacus (rose of sharon)
- . Kniphofia uvaria (red hot poker)
- . Lonicera (honeysuckle)
- . Monarda (bee balm)
- . Nicotiana glauca (tree tobacco)
- . Penstemon
- . Phygelius (cape fuchsia)
- . Physostegia virginiana (obedience plant)
- . Ribes (wild currants and gooseberries)
- . Salvia** (sage)
- . Trichostema lanatum***(woolly blue curls)
- . Verbena bonariensis
- . Weigela

Flowers to support our hummer's voracious appetites include annual nasturtium, larkspur, Tithonia (Mexican sunflower), and Cleome (spider flower). Favorite flowering plants that live from year to year include foxglove, coral bells, red hot poker, Zauschneria, woolly blue curls, Monarda, Escallonia, Penstemon, many native salvias, Verbena bonariensis, Weigela, silk tree, and butterfly bush.

* Hardy in my Sonora garden for the last two years even though the SWGB lists only for warmer areas; orange flowers summer and fall.

** Salvias to try are: *S. clelandii*, *greggii*, *elegans* (pineapple sage) *guaranitica* (beautiful blue flowers), *involucrata*, *leucantha* (Mexican bush sage), *uliginosa*, and *sclarea*.

*** Probably withstands our cold but needs perfect drainage; a hummingbird magnet.

Resources: www.hummingbird.org and *A Book of Salvias*, Betsy Clebsch, Timber Press, Inc., 1997.

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