HUMMINGBIRD GARDENING BASICS

Want single tubular shaped flowers (bright colors especially red). Does not matter the size as can be as small as the heuchera to as large as daylily. You want some red in the mix. Hummingbirds typically go to red colored flowers only because red is not as attractive to bees. This means red flowers generally will have nectar available for hummingbirds. But they will use all colored flowers. Having other colors also attracts insects which they consume in their diet as well. Flowers only produce nectar each day, when it is gone there won’t be any more until the next day.

Plant in clusters – several of each variety unless it is a very large plant with lots of flowers, in larger bed if possible. Taller plants are better than very low growing plants. Use the low growing plants in containers and hanging baskets.

Need a continuous flower display from early spring until fall. This can be accomplished through annuals, biennials, perennials, vines, shrubs and trees.

Annuals: cannas, candy corn plant, cuphea (cigar plant), *foxglove, fuchsia, gladiolus, *lantana, *nicotiana, penstemon, petunia, verbena,
*salvia: greggi – autumn sage, (native to texas)
    guaranitica - anise sage “Black & Blue”, “Argentine Skies” (native to South America)
    farinacea – blue sage “Victoria”, “Blue Bedder” (native to Mexico)
    cocinea – texas sage
    patens – blue (native to Mexico)
    splendens – most common, “Bonfire”, “Lady In Red” (native to Brazil)
Perennials: agastache, *cardinal flower (lobelia cardinalis) – annual in western mn, *columbine, *coral bells (heuchera), delphinium, hollyhock (singles), hosta, liatris, lupine, maltese cross (lychnis), monarda (bee balm), phlox, tithonia (Mexican sunflower), achillea (yarrow)

Vines: asarina, *cardinal climber, chilean glory flower, cypress vine, honeysuckle, hyacinth bean, mandevilla (tropical plant – not hardy), moon flower, morning glory, scarlet runner bean, *trumpet vine (campsis radicans) – 10 times more nectar than most flowers

Shrubs: *butterfly bush (not hardy), flowering almond, honeysuckle, viburnum, *weigela, lilac

Trees: cherry, crabapples, eastern redbud, hawthorn, northern catalpa, plum,
*some of the best to include

Wildflowers: allium, asclepias, columbine, heuchera, liatris, penstemon, solidago

FEEDERS:
Feeder should have some red on it. Want a feeder that is easy to clean. Needs to be cleaned every 2-3 days when the temperature is over 60 degrees. Scrub in hot soapy water, rinse well. If mold add some vinegar. If still mold then soak in 10% bleach solution, then scrub in hot soapy water and rinse very well. Mold is deadly to ALL birds. Locate feeder preferably in the shade (less chance of mold developing), close to a shrub or tree.

Sugar solution: 1 part sugar to 4 parts water. Mix well and bring to a boil and continue to boil for 1 minute. Let cool and store in refrigerator. Can store for a couple weeks or more. Do not use honey as can cause a fungus on their tongues and they can die. Also do not use artificial sweeteners as no food value. Do not need to add red food coloring.

Put the feeder out in early spring (late April to very early May). Important to have out early so you have a better chance of keeping the hummingbirds there to nest. Preferably locate feeder in the shade. It is best to have two
feeders located in different areas of the yard as hummingbirds will guard a feeder as their own and fend off other hummingbirds from using it. Leave the feeder out until fall and continue to feed until hummingbirds appear to have migrated south. Having the feeder out in the fall will not keep hummingbirds from migrating. Actually more beneficial in the fall as helps them build up energy for the migration.