

Feeding Hummingbirds



Hummingbirds are fascinating little creatures

Only one species of hummingbird can be found in Québec: the ruby-throated hummingbird. Named such because of the male's bright red throat, the females and juveniles, on the other hand, have white throats.

These birds are long-distance migrants, spending the winter in the tropical forests of South America. Contrary to a common belief, they do not migrate sitting on the back of a Canada goose but fly across the Gulf of Mexico in one long non-stop flight that many of them do not survive.

Hummingbirds are found in most areas of southern Québec. Even if you live in an urban or suburban area, you should try a hummingbird feeder and you are likely to be surprised by some humming visitors.

Where

Hummingbirds seem to like feeders that are open to all sides. For example, they seem to avoid feeders that are placed too close to a building (within 1m). Hummingbirds are very protective of their feeder and will often chase each other if they happen to feed at the same time. If you observe many hummingbirds around, you can install a second feeder out of sight of the first one.

Maintenance

Change the solution at least twice a week, or three times if the temperature is high. This is very important as hummingbirds will abandon feeders that are not properly maintained.

Only half fill the feeder as pressure from heat will build within a full feeder causing the solution to spit out. This will attract unwanted visitors like wasps. Clean the feeder thoroughly with hot water every time you change the solution. If mold appears, soak in 1 part bleach to 10 parts water then rinse thoroughly.

When

Arrival and departure dates in spring and fall vary depending on your location but are quite consistent from one year to another. Install your feeder around April 25th (in the Montreal area) and remove one week after your last observation of a hummingbird in the fall (usually the end of September). Adjust dates according to your observations.

Ants

To prevent ants from invading your feeder, use an ant trap such as the one illustrated at right. They block the ants' way to the solution with water that ants, being poor swimmers, cannot cross.



RECIPE

Ingredients

- 4 parts of water
- 1 part of **white** sugar

Preparation

- Bring the water to a boil
- Remove from the stove
- Add the sugar and mix until dissolution

You are done!

You can make extra and store it in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

DO NOT use honey, brown sugar, turbinado sugar or any sweetener other than plain white sugar as many other sweeteners are harmful to the hummingbirds.

DO NOT put any food coloring to make the solution red. Coloring can be harmful and it is not needed to attract the hummingbirds; the color of the feeder is sufficient.