

MEXICAN FIREBUSH (*Hamelia patens*)

Red stalks and stems contrast to the green foliage.

Blooms profusely spring thru fall with brilliant orange, tube-like flowers. Purple berries attract song-birds. Grows in any soil in full sun. Freezes to ground but comes back reliably, although later in spring when the ground has warmed up.

FOUR-O'CLOCK (*Mirabilis jalapa*)

Erect, many-branched stems form mounded 3-4 foot clumps. Strong, bushy habit gives substance and

character. Trumpet-shaped flowers open in mid afternoon. Red-yellow elaborately splashed and stained flowers. Sun or shade. Drought tolerant in any type soil. Plant from seed.

LANTANA (*Lantana horrida*)

Deciduous native shrub blooms profusely even in the hottest weather. 1-4 foot tall depending on variety. Each blossom head is made of tiny multi-colored flowers. Leaves have sharp aroma. Full sun, all soils. Many hybrid color variations. Much favored by butterflies.

MEXICAN CIGAR PLANT (*Cuphea micropetala*)

Texas perennial that reaches 2-4 feet in height and blooms red-yellow tubular flowers that resemble miniature cigars. Blooms much of the summer. Drought tolerant.

As the hummer's habitat shrinks, supplement feeding becomes increasingly important. The energy requirements of a hummingbird's tiny body are astounding. Their survival depends on consuming 50% of their body weight in sucrose (table sugar) every day! A hummingbird bash in your own backyard during the summer can be an extravagant event! An inexpensive feeder and a batch of syrup is all that you need.

NECTAR SHOULD BE CHANGED EVERY 2-3 DAYS IN THE HEAT OF SUMMER. Better to be drained dry than spoil, so serve only as much as your birds consume in a few day's time.

Wash feeders thoroughly before filling. Rinse in a weak vinegar or clorox solution to kill mildew spores, rinse again very thoroughly before filling. Keep two feeders on hand - while one is being used, the other can be sent through the dishwasher (no heat while drying). Sterilization retards mildew growth and fermentation which can sicken birds.

A hummingbird's diet includes insects (for protein and fat), as well as the necessary nectar produced by tubular flowers. Red is not a color a hummingbird is instinctly born to go to. It simply learns while feeding that red tubular flowers contain more nectar than other colored flowers. So trained do they become to red, that no food coloring is necessary in an artificial feeder which has red on the top or bottom. It's best to leave it out to avoid the controversy concerning harmful effects to the birds. Nectar is found in other colored tubular flowers and the birds do go to them for nectar.