



Hummingbird Feeders

Michigan's only native hummingbird, the ruby-throated hummingbird, is currently arriving in northern Michigan after spending the winter in southern Mexico and Central America. It's time to get those feeders ready, and also time for a refresher on how to feed hummingbirds the right way.

- 1) The sugar water mix should always be made with 4 parts water to one part sugar. And not just any sugar will do; pure white table sugar is the best, because when combined with water, it most closely mimics the chemical composition of flower nectar. Do not use organic or raw sugar, as it can contain levels of iron that are unsafe for hummingbirds, and never use powdered sugar, brown sugar, or honey. Finally, the addition of red dye is unnecessary and may even be harmful to the birds.
- 2) If you don't use all the sugar water in filling your feeder, the extra can be refrigerated for up to a week to top up your feeders.
- 3) Change out the sugar water before it becomes cloudy, which can occur within 3 days in hot weather. Before filling your feeders back up, clean them with a solution of 1 part white vinegar to 4 parts water to discourage fungal growth. To discourage the growth of mold, make sure to place your feeders in the shade.
- 4) Consider having multiple feeders out of sight of each other to discourage hummingbirds, who are territorial in the breeding season, from dominating and monopolizing your feeder.
- 5) Consider planting some native wildflowers in your yard that serve as a natural food source for hummingbirds. In northern Michigan, great picks include beebalm (also called wild bergamot or Monarda) and cardinal flower.

