

Mill Creek Seed Co.

HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS

SELECTING THE RIGHT FEEDER

Almost all the feeders on the market today will dispense nectar quite well, but careful selection of a feeder may make owning a hummer feeder more pleasurable.

Choosing a feeder with red colouring around the access holes or on the base will help to attract the hummers and alleviate the need of adding colouring to your nectar solution. I can attest to the attractiveness of the colour red to our ruby throated hummingbirds. These little beauties are more difficult to attract than most of the southern or western hummers, but having red on your feeder will help catch their attention.

Choose a feeder that can easily be washed out. Prevention of fermentation through regular cleaning is critical to the health of your hummers.

If your feeder has perches, the hummers will light on them while refuelling, giving you a chance to observe them closely. Otherwise, they will hover in their usual manner. Either way seems quite acceptable to our little friends.

Feeder reservoirs hold from 3 to 32 oz. of fluid. The small sizes are cute but not always practical. An 8 to 16 oz. capacity is a good size to start. Remember, you can partially fill the reservoir each time during light usage periods, but should you get a bumper crop of hummers, you may be very glad of the extra capacity.

Most feeder reservoirs work on the principle of gravity feed and vacuum control. If air is able to enter this type of reservoir through poorly fitted connections or excess movement caused by the wind, the feeder will leak and you will have a continuous joy refilling it. Good quality feeders and especially those with glass reservoirs are less likely to have this problem.

Another alternative is to choose a feeder with a saucer type reservoir which is below the access holes. This type of feeder usually has an added advantage. To obtain a reasonable capacity in the shallow reservoir, the diameter of the feeder is usually quite large, thereby improving the access for several hummers at one time.

Wasp and bee guards help to prevent the insects from hogging the feeder by keeping the nectar out of reach, but these devices fail if the hummers get sloppy and spill nectar on

the guards, or if the wind causes the nectar to spill out on to them. One new technology uses nectar guard tips with slits cut into them to allow hummingbirds to access the food while keeping insects out.

PLACEMENT AND ATTRACTION

Placement of feeders in or near blooming flowers, especially trumpet shaped blossoms. This will certainly increase the chances of attracting hummers to your feeder. Gradual movement of the feeder toward a more visible or handy location may be desired after the birds have found the bounty you have provided.

Placing the feeder in an open but shaded location will help your feeding efforts in two ways. Gravity feed type feeders will tend to leak if they are mounted in the direct sun. The sun heats the fluid and air pocket, expanding both and forcing out the liquid. Overnight, the whole outfit cools down and draws air into the reservoir ready to be heated again the next morning.

Secondly and more importantly, the sun and heat tend to speed the formation of bacteria and the process of fermentation which could be harmful or fatal to the birds you attract.

Of equal importance is having the feeder where it will be easily accessible. If it is difficult to get at, it is less likely to be filled and cleaned on a regular basis, and will be less of a pleasure for you.

Finally, mounting the feeder out of the wind or on a rigid support will help to prevent the fluid from spilling and leaking, and will make it easier for the hummers to feed during windy weather.

MAINTENANCE

Hummingbird feeders should be washed out with a hot water and vinegar solution twice a week during the hot weather, to reduce bacteria and fermentation in the food solution. A new feeder should be thoroughly rinsed before initial use.

NOTES OF INTEREST

FOOD

Food solutions can be made at home using 1 part white sugar to 4 parts water for general feeding. A 1 to 3 ratio can be used to help attract the hummers at first, but should not be fed continuously as this may harm the birds. Commercial mixes are also good and will simulate the flower nectar a little closer than homemade mixes. Any solution should be boiled for two minutes to help kill bacteria and prevent fermentation. It is usually more convenient to make up a large batch of solution (3-4 days worth) and keep the extra in the refrigerator.

HONEY

Honey should NEVER be used in your feeder. It is suspected of supporting a fungus that infects the hummingbird's tongue.

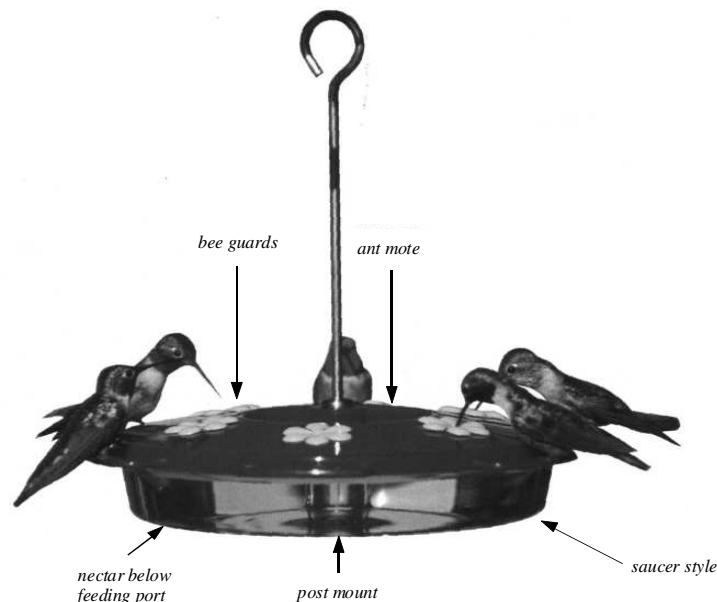
PESTS

Bees and wasps can prevent the hummers from using your feeder. Feeders equipped with bee guards are useful. Vegetable oil, mineral oil or Vaseline spread thinly around the feeding holes will also help to discourage these insects. Ants can be discouraged by spreading oil or Vaseline on the support wire holding your feeder. Ant moats are also available to attach to feeders.

WHEN TO FEED

Hummers should start arriving in our area when the flowers start to bloom and will stay late into the fall. Through observation and banding, it has been found that those hummers who appear at your feeders late in the fall are not usually the same ones as those you fed all summer, but travellers on their way south. Leave your feeders up as long as you can. You will not prevent the hummers from migrating, but may give a hungry little traveller a well needed boost.

Benefits of Saucer style feeders

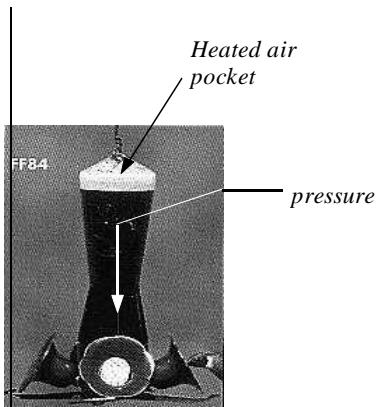


Leaking Hummingbird Feeders ?

Many customers return hummingbird feeders claiming that they leak. Physics can help to explain and resolve what seems to be a defective feeder. Any feeder that has a reservoir above the feeding ports is susceptible to this condition.

After a cool summer evening the feeder and nectar cool down only to be reheated with the early morning sunshine. The air pocket in the top of the feeder heats up quickly similar to a greenhouse. As the heat increases it creates high pressure inside the vessel and pumps the nectar out of the ports. Under consistent temperatures the air pocket holds the nectar in using a vacuum.

We suggest that solution to this problem is 1. to move the feeder to an area that will shade it from the morning sun 2. use an arbour style feeder like the Yule Hyde FF84W, 3. Use a saucer style feeder like the K-Feeder model shown. When the saucer style is heated it simply allows the heated air to escape through the feeding ports.



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