



BACKYARD nature center News

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Gardens for Hummingbirds

Bright-colored, quick-moving, and aerodynamically improbable, hummingbirds seem to make play of all of life's chores. Whether feeding, courting, bathing, or taking care of the kids, hummers dart, dive, and hover with apparent joy. It's no wonder that so many of us want these winged jewels in our yards.

You can make your property into a hummingbird playground by offering a range of dining options, moving water, and a place for their nurseries.

Dining Options

Plan your garden carefully to provide an immovable feast for one of nature's most movable creatures. Your garden should flower from late spring to early-to-mid fall, thus offering a continual source of nectar and insects for the hummers. Considering the number of visits they make to our feeders, it's often surprising to learn that hummers get only a small percentage of their calories from

feeder offerings.

Hummingbirds spend much of the day sipping nectar from flowers and munching spiders and gnats and other insects.

Hummingbirds don't play well with others. Females tolerate their mates only long enough to ensure reproductive success. Your garden will attract more hummingbirds if it is designed with physically separate areas for feeders and for alfresco dining.

For a garden pleasing to both the human and the hummingbird eye, plant flowers of various sizes and bloom times. Generally, you will want to plant low-growing flowers in the front (facing your viewing area) and taller ones in the back.

Moving Water

Water is an often-ignored (but important) element of a hummingbird garden. A birdbath is OK, but



one with a mister will be a real hit! These birds will not hesitate to fly through a man-made sprinkler or mister for a quick rinse.

The Nursery

Hummingbirds usually build their tiny, cup-shaped nests 10 to 20 feet off the ground. Each lichen-covered nest is held together with spider silk and attached to a downward-sloping tree limb, sometimes over a body of water, such as a stream or creek.

Other Tips

Hummingbirds are aggressive. They will perch on any branch with a good view and quick access to the feeding grounds. They don't hesitate to launch an aggravated assault at any other bird that presumes to feed in their territory. Happily, hummers seem to consider us too slow and too stupid to be a threat to them!

There are no guarantees, of course, but a hummingbird-attractive garden and a feeder full of nectar will probably go a long way toward convincing the hummers that your yard is THE place to set up house-keeping. If you'd like some help choosing garden flowers that attract hummingbirds, talk to us the next time you're in the store.



Sugar Junkies

Orioles will be arriving in mid-April and this is one delight that you don't want to miss! They may be one of the most colorful birds in your yard. The male Baltimore oriole is flame orange and black with a solid black head, orange sides and two white wing bars. The females, however are olive drab with one white wing bar, all the better to camouflage herself around the nest. At almost 9 inches tip to tale, colorful, and noisy, they definitely make themselves noticed, especially when squabbling over a jelly feeder with their favorite treat!



Oriole Haven

Nesting high in mature trees, Orioles leave a beautiful woven hanging bag or pouch for us to see after leaves fall in September. The pouch is a wonder of nature, and looks like a very cozy home to raise young. When young leave the nest, they follow mom and dad to the fruit and jelly feeders for some high octane food. Oriole diets consist of insects and fruit, but you may see them on your feeders containing fine sunflower hearts.

I want to keep these colorful and bossy songbirds coming to my yard so I spoil them with homemade jelly offered in two feeders with small domes over them to keep any rain from diluting their treat.



One is a copper hanging heart shape wire that holds a glass custard cup. The other is a simple black iron loop that holds an orange glass dish the size of a tuna can. I place two jelly feeders about 15 feet apart and hanging off the screened in porch. That seems to keep the activity going from sun up to sun down. I top the feeders off each morning and evening. Any grape jelly will do, but I like the consistency of jelly made from grape and apple juice, boiled with 12 cups of sugar and pectin. That's a lot of sugar! Is it any wonder that I call them "sugar junkies"!

Best New Product Exquisite Carved Gourds For Birds!

Long ago, Native Americans recognized the benefits of having birds in their villages so they hung gourd nests to attract them. These original gourds are hand-carved and colored with fire using a technique dating over 4,000 years! The homes make a cozy nest for chickadees, nuthatches, wrens and other small birds.



Supplied to us by Lucuma Designs, the homes are made in Peru. Choosing an original hand-carved gourd empowers talented artists to better support their families and communities. Creative sustainable designs, superb craftsmanship, collaboration, and long-term personal relationships make them possible. Lucuma has been a member of the "FAIR TRADE FEDERATION" since 1999. That means that the craftsmen are paid a fair wage for their hard work and creative talents. Together, Lucuma Designs and these artists are building a world of compassion, prosperity and beauty for all.

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Nick and Cathy Clausen, Owners

Hummer Fun

15% OFF
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It's Here! Nesting Season Begins

One of the greatest experiences you can have as a nature watcher is observing the nesting activities of birds. In addition to courtship and nest building, you can enjoy watching the hatching, feeding, and, finally, the fledging of the young birds. As described below, birds have four basic nest styles.

Some birds nest in cavities such as tree holes, nest boxes (the “politically correct” term for bird houses), or the nooks of buildings. These birds (woodpeckers, bluebirds, chickadees, House Wrens, and 85 other species in North America) are known as cavity nesters.

Many other species of birds (including goldfinches, robins, and mockingbirds) build their nests out in the open, on branches of shrubs and trees. These cup-shaped nests are open to the sky.

Most other birds nest on the ground, either in open cups or shallow depressions scraped in the ground. Common ground nesters include killdeer, towhees, and many species of native sparrows. (Loose cats and dogs are the second biggest cause of the decline in populations of ground-nesting birds, the first being loss of habitat.)

A few birds, including the Belted Kingfisher, actually build their nests underground or in holes along the banks of creek beds.

How to use a nest box

Many people believe, mistakenly, that you need a vast amount of property to attract birds to a nest box. This is not true. Many of our customers with smaller yards have successfully attracted House Wrens and chickadees. The design of the nest box is important; look for the following criteria:

- Dimensions suited to the species you want to attract.
- Unless the house is for martins, use a box made of wood that is 5/8 to 3/4 inch thick. Wood expands and contracts with the weather. Make

sure the wood has not been planted, stained, or coated in any way. Do not use boxes made with plywood or pressure-treated wood.

- Proper ventilation, either through holes or slits in the top or sides.
- Drainage holes or slits in the bottom so water can drain out.
- A top, front, or side opening that will make the box easy to clean out after nesting season.
- For certain species, there should be horizontal grooves on the inside of the box, under the entrance hole, to enable the young to crawl up to the hole when they are ready to fledge.
- No perches. Our cavity nesting birds are clinging birds, they do not require perches. Perches will make the box more suitable for non-native

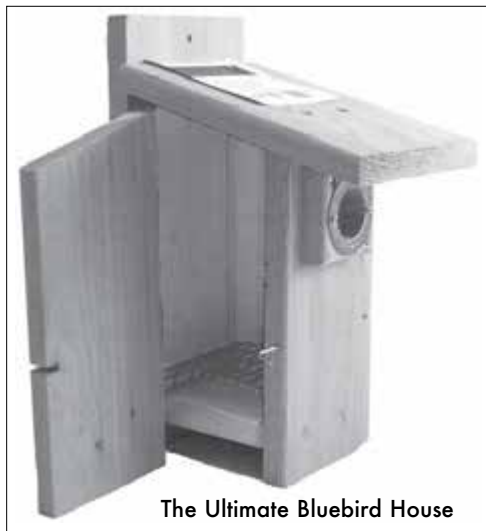


species such as starlings and House Sparrows.

- Ideally, the roof will overhang the entrance hole by an inch or so to protect the inside of the box from the sun and rain.

Where to put it

Although a lot of people hang or mount their nest boxes directly on trees (drilling two screws into a mature tree will not hurt it), you can also mount your box on a pole. Many folks like the idea of tucking their nest boxes into quaint and cozy locations within deep foliage of trees. But doing this only hurts your chances for successfully attracting nesting birds. Remember, naturally occurring cavities are usually found on dead trees, which have no foliage. Birds are unlikely to look for cavities on thriving, healthy, healthy trees, so place your nest box out in the open if you can. If possible, mount it where it will receive a little afternoon shade (in case of very hot weather).



The Ultimate Bluebird House



Nick and Cathy Clausen are the owners of the Backyard Nature Center master gardeners, avid backyard bird-watchers

Did you know?

A hummingbird has between 40 and 60 taste buds; a human has approximately 10,000 taste buds.



For people who feed and care for backyard birds
The Shops at Tallgrass
8336 E. 21st Street, #500 • Wichita, KS 67206
www.backyardnaturecenter.com
316-683-2121

STORE HOURS

OPEN 7 DAYS WEEK

Monday–Friday: 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Sunday: 12 noon–4 p.m.

We will be closed Easter Sunday.

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