

Weekly Column for week of 2-1-10  
Ericka Soumare  
Purdue Extension, Elkhart County  
Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator  
Phone: 574-533-0554  
17746 C.R. 34, Goshen, IN 46526

## **Attracting Hummingbirds this Spring**

In last week's article, I discussed landscape planning for wildlife in your backyard. This time around, let's talk specifics. The idea of attracting more hummingbirds is a good place to start. When we think of hummingbirds and what we can provide for them, we often consider nectar – whether from a flower or from a feeder. However, the truth of the matter is that insects are actually the primary source of protein for adult and baby hummingbirds. They have even been known to steal insects from spider webs!

Creating a weedy patch in your yard made up of native forbs and grasses is one way to attract insects. As mentioned in my previous article, these areas can be mowed around to look nicer or bordered with flowers so that your patch is more pleasing to the eye. Planting native wildflower gardens and flowering trees and shrubs can also provide a variety of insects for hummingbirds.

Nectar must not be overlooked because it is still important to the diet of hummingbirds. Two sources provide this nectar- flowers and feeders. Many species of flowers are pollinated by hummingbirds instead of bees. Red is the color that hummingbirds are most fond of. Bees can't see red very well and, for this reason, many red flowers are pollinated by the hummingbird. Hummingbirds also prefer flowers that offer no type of perching stems. These flowers often point downward and may have long tubes.

Feeders are also a great source of nectar for hummingbirds and can provide a consistent food source in early spring before flowers bloom. As with red flowers, red feeders are more successful at attracting hummingbirds. Even the wasp and hornet guards on feeders should be red and not yellow. Placing the feeder in a shaded area will help the nectar stay cool and delay spoiling. Making sure that there are trees or perching spots for hummingbirds to rest is also essential.

Anyone who has had the privilege of just sitting back and watching hummingbirds can appreciate how they effortlessly hover as they search for food. For more information on how to attract hummingbirds to your yard this spring, you can visit the web at <http://www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-249-W.pdf>. You can also contact your Elkhart County Extension office for more information.

Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity institution.