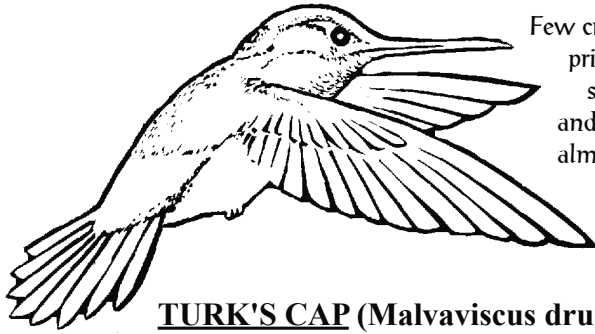


# Hummingbird Plants for San Antonio



Few creatures excite the imagination like the tiny, iridescent hummingbird. Introducing appropriate plants, particularly natives, into the home landscape will provide the birds food and shelter. Using native plant materials frequently dramatically reduces the gardener's water and maintenance requirements as well. Hummingbirds feed only at very specific flowers: almost exclusively red tube-like or trumpet-shaped blooms. By working with, rather than against nature you can develop diverse, low cost, low-maintenance, healthy and attractive landscapes, while providing food for the tiny "jewels of the skies"  
- the hummingbirds.

## **TURK'S CAP (*Malvaviscus drummondii*)**

This native shrub, a relative of the hibiscus, was once abundant in East, Central and South Texas in open woods and along streams in damp or shaded areas. A primary food source for hummingbirds. Found naturally along creeks and bottomland in Bexar County.

Scarlet blooms average 1", resemble an upright Turkish turban. Broad petals closely wrap at the base, spread upward toward the end. Stamens extend beyond the petals. Upright, woody and widely-branched, a pleasing shrub 2½-3 feet high. Ideal for color in shade, all soils. Small red apple-like fruit is relished by numerous birds.

## **SCARLET SALVIA (*Salvia coccinea*)**

Clusters or whorls of 2-6 florescent red 1 inch flowers on long slender square-stemmed spikes. Rises from a woody base 1-3 feet tall. Mint family. Hardy in full sun, blooms year-round, readily reseeds. Thrives in any soil.

## **AUTUMN SAGE (*Salvia greggii*)**

Profuse bright red, salmon or pink blossoms: double lipped, the broad lower lip droops. 2-3 feet tall, unbranched. True sage. Aromatic leaves. Blooms prolifically spring thru fall. Prune the tips to keep full and bushy. Requires good drainage, full to partial sun. Excellent in pots.

## **MEXICAN BUSH SAGE (*Salvia leucantha*)**

Long, slender, rose-purple spikes studded with small white flowers adorn this Mexican native all summer and fall. Plants typically reach 3-4 feet in height. Quite spectacular. Very drought tolerant and grows in any type of soil.

## **CAPE HONEYSUCKLE (*Tecomaria capensis*)**

Spectacular upright shrubby vine can be trained to a high support. Dark, glistening green leaflets, bountiful, brilliant orange/red clusters of tubular flowers. Blooms cyclically all summer and throughout mild winters. Freezes to the ground in colder winters but comes back with a vengeance.

## **CORAL HONEYSUCKLE (*Lonicera sempervirens*)**

Shrubby, twining bluish-green evergreen or semi-evergreen native vine valued for showy, red/orange/scarlet trumpet-shaped 2 inch flowers in whorls on end of branches. Requires support. Scarlet berries attract foraging songbirds. Blooms year round. Semi-evergreen during the winter. A hummingbird favorite.

## **DESERT WILLOW (*Chilopsis linearis*)**

An open, airy small tree or large shrub. Shaggy bark, twisting trunks.

Orchid-like flowers with crimped lobes in white/pink/lavender, marked with purple. Blooms in spring and sometimes fall.

## **HUMMINGBIRD BUSH (*Anisacanthus wrightii*)**

Spreading shrub grows to 4 feet tall. Dainty red or orange tubular flowers on tall thin stalks with slender leaves. Feathery appearance. Thrives in full sun, dappled shade. Reseeds prolifically to form a dense hedge. Freezes, comes back readily.

## **RED PENTAS (*Pentas lanceolata*)**

Shrubby erect herb, 2-4 feet tall. Hairy leaves 1-6 inches long. Delicate 1 inch star-shaped flowers spread into dense 3 inch clusters. Color so bright, you would swear they connected to batteries! Prune to prevent legginess.

## **MEXICAN FIRECRACKER BUSH (*Russelia*)**

Shrub 1-3 feet tall with arching cascade of rush-like branches, nodding or pendulous at top with delicate 1 inch red tubular flowers among slender linear leaves. Unique texture.

## **SHRIMP PLANT (*Beloperone guttata*)**

Mounds 3-4 feet high of egg-shaped shiny leaves. Tubular flowers white to spotted purple, enclosed in coppery bronze overlapping bracts form compact, drooping spikes. Flowers resemble large shrimp. Also available in yellow.

## **TRUMPET VINE (*Campis*)**

Vigorous clinging deciduous vines. Open, arching sprays of vivid orange or red trumpet-shaped flowers. "Maden Galen" is the best known hybrid. Full sun.

## **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

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attract songbirds. 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

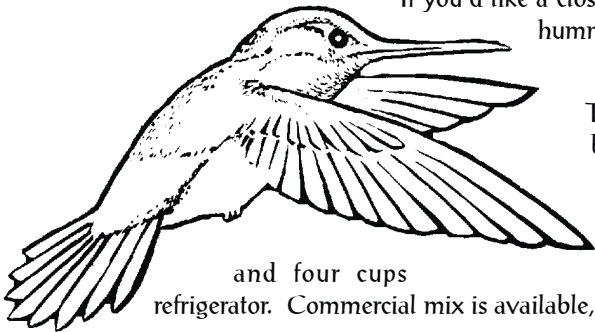
multi-colored flowers. Leaves have sharp aroma. Full sun, all soils. Many hybrid color variations. Much favored by butterflies.

### **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.

## **GARDEN FEEDERS, A WELCOME TREAT FOR HUNGRY HUMMERS**

If you'd like a closer look at that streak of electric green in your garden with the dazzling scarlet cravat, a hummingbird feeder will do the trick. (Female hummers lack the glittering gorget.)



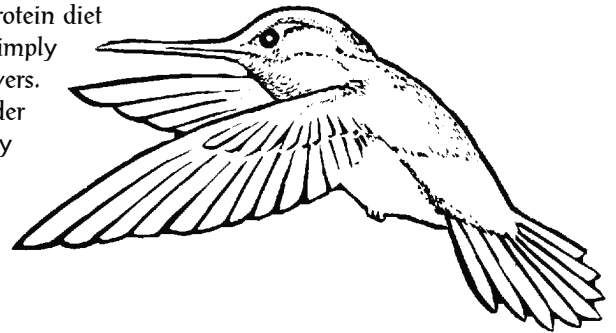
and four cups refrigerator. Commercial mix is available, just add water.

As the hummer's habitat shrinks, supplement feeding becomes increasingly important. The energy requirements of a hummingbird's tiny body (the bird kingdom's smallest - their brains are proportionately the largest) 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. Syrup consists of one cup table sugar of water. Bring to a boil in the microwave and mix thoroughly. Store excess in the

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. If you're not willing to commit to keeping the syrup fresh, plant tubular red flowers from this list in the yard instead.

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. Many people mistakenly think that because a hummingbird goes to flowers other than those with tubular flowers, that they are drinking nectar. They are not, but are probably taking a sip of morning dew from a morning glory or satisfying their protein diet of insects at a zinnia. 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.



**Rainbow Gardens #1**  
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**Rainbow Gardens #3**  
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