

## ASK A GREEN THUMB *Gardening experts answer your questions*

**Q** What are some appropriate plants and flowers to attract the beautiful hummingbirds in our area?

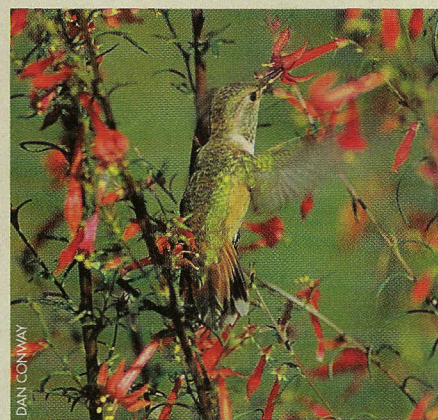
~Kelly Podorsek

**A** Hummingbirds tend to prefer long tubular and trumpet-shaped flowers as a general rule, but many other plants also attract the hummingbird's interest. The wispy pink puffball-shaped flowers produced by the low shrub known as fairy duster are popular with hummingbirds, as are the darker red puffballs produced by its cousin, the Baja fairy duster. I recommend mixing the two varieties to produce colorful results.

The desert willow tree has pretty lavender flowers that hummingbirds enjoy, and

because of the tree's height, hummingbirds can use it as a perch to watch over their territory. The tubular shape of red yucca draws hummingbirds, as do the orange flowers of the Mexican honeysuckle. Try any variety of penstemon with their tubular pinks, purples, and reds, as well as different varieties of aloe. The *Salvia greggii*—a small 2½-by-2½ foot shrub—attracts hummingbirds, as do some varieties of verbena.

When planning your garden, think about scale, balance, and repetition. Make sure you know the mature growth size of a plant before you buy, as you may not have space in your yard for a 6-inch plant when it matures to 6 feet high. Also, know about the sun and shade needs of a plant before you buy. All the plants I've mentioned are fairly hardy. With proper planning and research you will not only attract a lot of hummingbirds, you'll also have more time to



enjoy your garden in the long run, particularly if you properly install a drip-irrigation system.

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