



# CoastScapes

## Georgia Coastal Plain Native Plants For Hummingbird Habitat

### Introduction

The ruby-throated hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) is the only hummingbird that breeds in the eastern half of North America. It can be found in the spring, summer, and fall throughout Georgia, where it nests in the Coastal Plain, Piedmont, and Mountain Provinces. A wonderful way to enjoy the company of these hummingbirds is to create hummingbird-friendly habitat. **Nectar-producing plants, insects and water are three key ingredients to creating an environment your tiny visitors will appreciate!**

**Nectar-Producing Plants.** To be successful in keeping hummingbirds around your landscape, you must garden for them. Natural nectar from native plants provides hummingbirds with a steady supply of fast energy and a balanced source of micro-nutrients to meet the demands of their high metabolic rate. It is estimated that hummingbirds need to consume the nectar from between 1000 to 2000 flowers each day, which takes up around 1.5 times their body mass in water each day as they feed. Unfortunately, development and sprawl have caused hummingbird-friendly natural habitat to disappear all across the country and across the birds' migration routes. You can help ease the pressure by creating your own hummingbird-friendly habitat by implementing the following:

- Plants should be chosen for their ability to produce nectar, to grow well in your particular region, and to be in bloom when the hummingbirds need them. These provide the fundamental basis for creating hummingbird-friendly habitat.
- Choose native plants that provide significantly more nectar than cultivated hybrids and non-native ornamental plants. Since native plants evolved with our local climate, they also generally require less care than exotics and cultivars.

- Nesting hummingbirds will need nectar from roughly March to October. Therefore, your garden should have numerous native nectar plants available throughout this time. It is best to plant a variety of species and to arrange these flowers in several groupings. Nesting hummingbirds are very aggressive and territorial around their food source. Having more than one flower garden will allow several hummers to feed at the same time without conflict.
- Choose plants that hummingbirds prefer. These are generally odorless with tubular flowers. Tubular flowers that are either large and solitary or in loose drooping clusters appear best. Generally, tubular flowers hold large amounts of nectar at their base. Red blossoms are especially attractive to them, followed by oranges and pinks, purples, blues and yellows.
- Fill your landscape with a diversity of flowering plants, vines, shrubs and trees. Don't forget to provide native shade trees to provide nesting, roosting, and sheltering sites for hummingbirds. Consider including window boxes or hanging baskets as well.
- Beware of exotics, such as bougainvillea, which only trick hummingbirds into wasting precious energy trying to drink from empty blossoms.
- Encourage your community to make their landscapes hummingbird friendly as well. An entire corridor of habitat is much more valuable than scattered patches.

**Insects.** Although nectar and sap help meet some of the hummingbird's nutritional requirements, their diet also requires protein from both insects and pollen for growth (both chicks and feathers), development, and maintenance. Like swifts, hummingbirds have specialized neck muscles that help them take insects from the air. The birds also glean insects from leaves or bark of trees and from spider webs. To maintain a healthy ecosystem that will sustain wildlife and insects in your landscape, you can implement the following:

- Eliminate pesticide use in your landscape. Pesticide use can deplete the insect supply for hummingbirds and other birds and can lead to direct poisoning of birds. Spiders and insects, such as mosquitoes, aphids, and gnats, are an important part of an adult hummingbird's diet, and young hummingbirds that are still in the nest are fed them almost exclusively.
- Make your landscape contain some insect-pollinated flowers as well as plants that hummingbirds pollinate.
- Provide birds with extra protein by hanging a basket with overripe fruit or banana peels nearby to attract fruit flies that they can consume.

- Hummingbird nests are woven together with spider webs. Thus, it is important to protect spiders from pesticides. Hummingbird nests are usually built 15 to 20 feet up in trees, near the ends of hanging branches sheltered from above by leaves.

**Water.** Providing appropriate fresh water resources for bathing is an important element in attracting hummingbirds. Hummingbirds are known to bathe in pools of droplets that collect on leaves. They also prefer to bathe in water that is shallow and moving. Make sure that your bird baths, feeders, and/or misters are at least four feet above a cleared area in order to prevent cat predation.

## Other Hummingbird Gardening Considerations

**Artificial Feeders.** Flowers are the natural way to attract hummingbirds to your landscape. However, man-made feeders filled with the correct ratio and fresh mixture of water and sugar provide a supplement to flowers that increases the likelihood of attracting hummingbirds. Because feeders can be placed almost anywhere, they increase your opportunities to view hummers from inside your home. However, feeders should not be the sole source of food provided. The sugar may appeal to the hummingbirds' sweet tooth, but it provides less nourishment than the mineral and protein-rich natural nectar. Provide and maintain a hummingbird feeder filled with fresh non-distilled water and uncolored white granulated cane table sugar (sucrose) (one part sugar to four parts water). NEVER use honey or artificial sweeteners, which could be fatal to hummingbirds if ingested. Boil the sugar solution to help dissolve the sugar. Then allow it to cool before filling a feeder. Georgia's hot weather can cause rapid bacterial growth in these feeders and birds that drink contaminated water can die. To avoid this, change the solution every 2 to 4 days (depending on the season). Thoroughly clean the feeders with hot water and white vinegar. Do not use soap or chlorine bleach. If you are using more than one feeder, arrange them at least 10 feet apart so that all hummers can feed peacefully at once.

**Cats are Predators.** These tiny birds are susceptible to predation by house cats. Please keep cats indoors to protect them from the elements and to protect hummingbirds and other native birds from their hunting activities.

For more information regarding Georgia's coastal plain native plants, to utilize the CoastScapes coastal plains native plant search engine website, or learn more about how to promote and protect pollinators, go to the CoastScapes website: [www.coastscapes.org](http://www.coastscapes.org).

## Plant Choice Considerations

The native plants listed below have been reported by various sources to provide hummingbird food sources. Although these plants provide numerous benefits of being native plants (e.g., reduced water needs, reduced fertilizer and pesticide use, etc.), new plantings will require regular irrigation for six weeks to six months or more before they become established. Trees larger than two inches caliper width will take longer to establish. Although native plants have evolved to local conditions, plants of any species must be allowed time to become fully established in a landscape before all of its native plant features will be evident. All plants need water while establishing their root system and during periods of extended drought. Root establishment can take from months to one to several years, depending on the original size of the plant. Larger plants will take longer to establish.

Although the plants provided in the list below may be native to the coastal plain region of Georgia, individual plants may not grow everywhere in the region. In addition, the characteristics of any site will typically vary from place to place and some plants may do better than others at various places within a site. Putting plants in the right places is the key to ensuring they survive and remain healthy in your landscape. When selecting plants from this list, remember that many factors determine the suitability of a plant for a particular location. Consider light requirements, local climate, soil type, moisture, adaptability, hardiness, heat tolerance, and other factors. All plants listed are suited to the USDA Hardiness Zone 8. Please check to see if your zone falls within the 8a or 8b hardiness zone and then choose plants accordingly. Choose native plants that match and thrive under the conditions in your landscape and you will have a hummingbird-friendly CoastScapes landscape! You will reduce the need for water, fertilizers, pesticides, and pruning while providing valuable wildlife habitat.

# Georgia Coastal Plain Native Plants For Hummingbird Habitat

## Trees

<i>Aesculus parviflora</i>	bottlebrush buckeye
<i>Aesculus pavia</i>	red buckeye
<i>Aesculus sylvatica</i>	painted buckeye
<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	eastern redbud
<i>Crataegus flava</i>	yellow hawthorn
<i>Crataegus marshallii</i>	parsley hawthorn
<i>Halesia carolina</i>	Carolina silverbell
<i>Halesia diptera</i>	two-wing silverbell
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	tuliptree
<i>Prunus americana</i>	American plum
<i>Prunus angustifolia</i>	Chickasaw plum
<i>Prunus caroliniana</i>	Carolina laurelcherry
<i>Prunus serotina</i>	black cherry
<i>Prunus umbellata</i>	hog plum
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	black locust

## Shrubs

<i>Amorpha fruticosa</i>	desert false indigo
<i>Amorpha georgiana</i>	Georgia false indigo
<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	American beautyberry
<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>	New Jersey tea
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	common buttonbush
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	coastal sweetpepperbush
<i>Clinopodium coccineum</i>	scarlet calamint
<i>Clinopodium georgianum</i>	Georgia calamint
<i>Erythrina herbacea</i>	redcardinal
<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	mountain laurel
<i>Lindera benzoin</i>	northern spicebush
<i>Morella cerifera</i>	wax myrtle

<i>Photinia pyrifolia</i>	red chokeberry
<i>Rhododendron alabamense</i>	Alabama azalea
<i>Rhododendron arborescens</i>	smooth azalea
<i>Rhododendron atlanticum</i>	dwarf azalea
<i>Rhododendron austrinum</i>	orange azalea
<i>Rhododendron canescens</i>	mountain azalea
<i>Rhododendron colemanii</i>	Red Hills azalea
<i>Rhododendron flammeum</i>	pedmont azalea
<i>Rhododendron minus</i>	pedmont rhododendron
<i>Rhododendron periclymenoides</i>	pink azalea
<i>Rhododendron prunifolium</i>	plumleaf azalea
<i>Rhododendron viscosum</i>	swamp azalea
<i>Rhus aromatica</i>	fragrant sumac
<i>Rhus copallinum</i>	winged sumac
<i>Rhus glabra</i>	smooth sumac
<i>Rubus argutus</i>	sawtooth blackberry
<i>Sambucus nigra ssp. canadensis</i>	American black elderberry
<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	highbush blueberry
<i>Vaccinium virgatum</i>	smallflower blueberry
<i>Viburnum acerifolium</i>	mapleleaf viburnum
<i>Viburnum dentatum</i>	southern arrowwood
<i>Viburnum nudum</i>	possumhaw
<i>Viburnum obovatum</i>	small-leaf arrowwood
<i>Viburnum prunifolium</i>	blackhaw
<i>Viburnum rufidulum</i>	rusty blackhaw

## Perennials

<i>Amorpha herbacea</i>	clusterspike false indigo
<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>	red columbine
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	swamp milkweed
<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	butterfly milkweed
<i>Cirsium virginicum</i>	Virginia thistle
<i>Coreopsis major</i>	greater tickseed
<i>Coreopsis tinctoria</i>	golden tickseed
<i>Heuchera americana</i>	American alumroot

<i>Hibiscus aculeatus</i>	comfortroot
<i>Hibiscus coccineus</i>	scarlet rosemallow
<i>Hibiscus grandiflorus</i>	swamp rosemallow
<i>Hibiscus laevis</i>	halberdleaf rosemallow
<i>Hibiscus moscheutos</i>	crimsoneyed rosemallow
<i>Impatiens capensis</i>	jewelweed
<i>Ionactis linariifolius</i>	flaxleaf whitetop aster
<i>Ipomopsis rubra</i>	standing cypress
<i>Iris hexagona</i>	Dixie iris
<i>Iris verna</i>	dwarf violet iris
<i>Iris virginica</i>	Virginia iris
<i>Liatris aspera</i>	tall blazing star
<i>Liatris chapmanii</i>	Chapman's blazing star
<i>Liatris elegans</i>	pinkscale blazing star
<i>Liatris gracilis</i>	slender blazing star
<i>Liatris pilosa</i>	shaggy blazing star
<i>Liatris picata</i>	dense blazing star
<i>Liatris squarrosa</i>	scaly blazing star
<i>Liatris tenuifolia</i>	shortleaf blazing star
<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	cardinalflower
<i>Lobelia puberula</i>	downy lobelia
<i>Lupinus diffusus</i>	Oak Ridge lupine
<i>Lupinus perennis</i>	sundial lupine
<i>Malva viscus arboreus</i>	wax mallow
<i>Monarda citriodora</i>	lemon beebalm
<i>Monarda punctata</i>	spotted beebalm
<i>Oenothera biennis</i>	common evening primrose
<i>Oenothera drummondii</i>	beach evening primrose
<i>Oenothera fruticosa</i>	narrowleaf evening primrose
<i>Oenothera humifusa</i>	seabeach evening primrose
<i>Oenothera laciniata</i>	cutleaf evening primrose
<i>Oenothera speciosa</i>	pinkladies
<i>Penstemon australis</i>	Eustis Lake beardtongue
<i>Penstemon dissectus</i>	dissected beardtongue
<i>Penstemon laevigatus</i>	eastern smooth beardtongue
<i>Penstemon multiflorus</i>	manyflower beardtongue
<i>Phlox amoena</i>	hairy phlox

<i>Phlox carolina</i>	thickleaf phlox
<i>Phlox divaricata</i>	wild blue phlox
<i>Phlox drummondii</i>	annual phlox
<i>Phlox glaberrima</i>	smooth phlox
<i>Phlox maculata</i>	wild sweetwilliam
<i>Phlox pilosa</i>	downy phlox
<i>Phlox nivalis</i>	trailing phlox
<i>Physostegia angustifolia</i>	narrowleaf false dragonhead
<i>Physostegia purpurea</i>	eastern false dragonhead
<i>Physostegia virginiana</i>	obedient plant
<i>Polygonatum biflorum</i>	smooth Solomon's seal
<i>Salvia azurea</i>	azure blue sage
<i>Salvia coccinea</i>	blood sage
<i>Salvia lyrata</i>	lyreleaf sage
<i>Salvia urticifolia</i>	nettleleaf sage
<i>Silene virginica</i>	fire pink
<i>Spigelia marilandica</i>	woodland pinkroot
<i>Symphotrichum cordifolium</i>	common blue wood aster
<i>Symphotrichum lateriflorum</i>	calico aster
<i>Symphotrichum elliotii</i>	Elliott's aster
<i>Symphotrichum patens</i>	late purple aster

## Vines

<i>Bignonia capreolata</i>	crossvine
<i>Campsis radicans</i>	trumpet creeper
<i>Clematis virginiana</i>	devil's darning needles
<i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i>	evening trumpetflower
<i>Ipomoea coccinea</i>	redstar
<i>Ipomoea cordatotriloba</i>	tievine
<i>Ipomoea imperati</i>	beach morningglory
<i>Ipomoea macrorhiza</i>	largeroot morningglory
<i>Ipomoea pandurata</i>	man of the earth
<i>Ipomoea pes-caprae</i>	bayhops
<i>Ipomoea sagittata</i>	saltmarsh morningglory
<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i>	trumpet honeysuckle
<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	Virginia creeper

*Passiflora incarnata*

*Smilax glauca*

*Smilax herbacea*

*Smilax pumila*

*Smilax smallii*

*Vitis aestivalis*

*Vitis rotundifolia*

purple passionflower

cat greenbriar

smooth carrion flower

sasparilla vine

lanceleaf greenbriar

summer grape

muscadine