April 10, 2008 Release
Tallahassee Democrat

As winter comes to a close and spring emerges, I begin to anticipate the return of ruby-throated hummingbirds. Almost like clockwork, they return to my garden around mid-March. I get a great deal of pleasure from their exciting return, so much so that over the years I have added many hummingbird nectar plants to the garden!

I would like to share with you some of my favorite ones that are not only hummingbird magnets but that are truly unique and reliable choices. All of these should be readily available at your local nursery.

The first two bloom early, welcoming back the iridescent beauties in March. Red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*) is a small native tree with palmate leaves and showy, creamy-red tubular blossoms. It requires very little care and enjoys partial sun. Native columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) has nodding red and yellow flowers and grows to two feet in semi-shade. It likes a high pH and so can use a little dehydrated lime once a year. Columbine will readily reseed if not in a heavily mulched bed.

The bullet-proof hummingbird gloxinia (*Sinningia sellovii*) is probably my most favorite! It has stiff textured foliage and grows to two and half feet with three feet tall arching floral spikes, bearing salmon-pink tubular blooms along each spike, all season long. It is definitely a super hardy, primo hummer plant for full to part sun.
*Dicliptera suberecta*, commonly known as “the hummingbird plant”, is a truly indestructible, low-growing perennial with felt-like, grey foliage on a two to three foot plant. Dicliptera bears brilliant red-orange tubular flowers which beckon hummingbirds. This silvery beauty flowers best in full sun and is drought- and salt-tolerant. Last spring we had a customer purchase several of these plants and came back the next day proclaiming she had a hummingbird drinking from her plants as she was planting them. Now that is a true hummer magnet!

Redvein parlor maple (*Abutilon x hybirdum*) is a small shrub with an upright growth habit to six feet. It sports evergreen, maple leaf-like foliage with orange, nodding bell-shaped flowers with red veins throughout the year. It even flowers in winter, making this one a perfect choice for attracting winter hummingbirds. Parlor maple will flower readily in full to part-sun.

With spring in the air I hope you, too, will enjoy marveling the ruby-throated hummingbird. Visit your local nursery and check out the array of hummingbird attractant plants, including those I’ve mentioned. I wish you a spring filled with hummingbirds, the true jewels of flight.

###