

Instructions For Cleaning Your Hummingbird Feeder

Your hummingbird feeder will require a thorough cleaning, likely once a week, once you have started to use it. Remember, the sugar water solution is also a great breeding media for fungus, mold and bacteria. So, in order to protect the health of your hummingbirds (as well as to make your feeders as attractive as possible), your feeder(s) will need to be kept clean. Depending on where you hang your feeder, you may have to clean the feeder more often if the location sees rain (especially if the feeder is hanging just beneath where your roof drains off), or if things are unusually dusty outside.

You may be tempted to skip the cleaning on a regular basis. If you do the result will be a reduction in hummingbird visits to your feeder, and when you do finally take your feeder apart to clean it you will likely find patches of black fungus/mold growing inside the feeder (and if you happen to have one of the less expensive feeders, you will find it devilishly hard to clean inside of the nooks and crannies).

The tools needed to clean your feeder are pretty simple: dish soap, a sponge, an old/used toothbrush, and depending on your feeder's design you may need a set of bottle brushes to get inside of the feeder.



For a simple feeder, like the one pictured above, you will just need a sponge, dish soap, and an old toothbrush to get all of the parts clean. Since the nectar reservoir in this case is a clear plastic, you should only use a sponge to clean the plastic surface inside and out so that the plastic does not get scratched (scratches will dull the clear plastic surface, but they will also provide a foothold for dirt and mold/fungus to attach to). The purpose of the toothbrush is to scrub any corners or tight spots that the sponge cannot reach. After washing the feeder with soap and warm water, a visual inspection should be adequate to assure you that the feeder is now clean. Rinsing all parts of the feeder to make sure that there is no soap residue left is an important step if you want to make sure that the nectar does not get contaminated with dish soap (a taste that your hummingbirds won't appreciate).

If your hummingbird feeder has a glass reservoir, you will need to get a bottle brush to clean the inside of the reservoir. There are special brush sets like this one below:



If you can find a baby bottle brush, that will do the job just as well. The trick is finding a bottle brush thin enough to fit through the opening in the glass reservoir and one long enough to reach all the way into the reservoir. The hummingbird feeder brush set pictured works well because it is designed for this specific purpose, and the large brush has a handle at the end that helps during cleaning, as well as being helpful in getting the brush back out of the reservoir once you are done. The photo below shows the large brush in action:



As mentioned previously, a used toothbrush is a handy tool for getting into tough to reach spots that a sponge just can't get to. The plastic parts of your feeder may not be dirty enough to always require the use of a toothbrush – so use your own judgment when using it. Based on my experience, you should definitely use the toothbrush to clean the plastic base of the feeder more thoroughly when: 1) the feeder has been out in the rain (especially if the feeder is hung on the edge of a roof); 2) conditions are dusty outside; 3) or if the feeder hasn't been thoroughly cleaned for several weeks. Either dirt, mold, or both can build up in corners. Also, in the case of some of the feeder designs, the reservoir may be threaded into the base, or there may be small nectar distribution holes/channels, which cannot be well cleaned without using either a toothbrush, or a very small brush (like the ones pictured in the kit on the first page), or both to do a good job. I usually give the threads a once over with the toothbrush just to make

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sure they are clean (and because I can't see into all of the recesses that are molded into the plastic parts.



Once you have finished with cleaning all of the feeder parts just dry them off, and you are ready to add the sugar solution.

Benefits Of Cleaning Your Feeder:

- ✓ Your sugar solution will last longer in a clean feeder.
- ✓ You will attract more hummingbirds to a clean feeder.
- ✓ You won't have to worry that you might be feeding your hummingbirds out of a feeder that could impact the health of your hummingbirds due to contamination.
- ✓ It will look more attractive!



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