The Boy and the Hummingbird

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The boy loved his garden more than any place in the world. Every morning he pulled on his red gardening gloves and filled his green watering can. He watered the flowers and whispered good morning to each one. His garden was small but tidy, with a few roses and one skinny tree. Still, the boy wished for more visitors with feathers and wings.

The boy had warm brown skin and short curly black hair. His round face held a cheerful, gap-toothed smile, and his big brown eyes missed nothing. He wore his yellow t-shirt and blue overalls every single day. In the garden, he watched bees hum and butterflies drift. "I want more birds to come," he said. "Lots and lots of birds."

Mama came outside wearing her green apron, her hair in a low bun. She saw the boy watching the empty sky. "Birds need food and a safe place to rest," she said gently. "What kind of flowers would they like?" The boy thought hard. Mama smiled. "Let's plant flowers that belong here. Native flowers feed our local wildlife best."

The next day they walked to a little plant shop. Mama pointed to bright red flowers with long tubes, and orange ones, and purple ones too. "Hummingbirds love these," she said. "Their beaks fit right inside." The boy chose an armful, hugging the pots close. His big brown eyes were shining. "Come on," he said. "Let's hurry home and plant them!"

In the garden, the boy dug small holes with his red-gloved hands. He patted the soil down and watered each plant with his green can. Mama showed him how to space them so roots could grow. "Patience," she said. "Flowers take time." The boy nodded and watered a little more. He could already picture tiny wings in the air.

Every day the boy checked the plants. First came green leaves, then little buds like tiny closed fists. He watered and waited and watched. "When will they open?" he asked Mama. "Soon," she said, "if we keep caring for them." The boy pulled one tiny weed and smiled at his skinny tree. Waiting was hard, but he was patient.

One sunny morning, the buds popped open all at once. Red, orange, and purple flowers glowed like little lanterns. The whole garden felt brighter and warmer. Bees buzzed in and out. The boy clapped his red-gloved hands together. "They're beautiful!" he shouted. Then he sat very still and waited for someone special to arrive.

Suddenly, something tiny zoomed past his ear. Zip! It stopped in midair, wings blurring like tiny fans. It was a hummingbird, no bigger than his thumb. Its back shone emerald green, its throat glowed ruby red, and its belly was white as cloud. The boy held his breath. "Hello, little one," he whispered.

The hummingbird hovered by a red flower, then dipped its long thin beak inside. Sip, sip, sip! It drank the sweet nectar and zipped to another bloom. Its feathers flashed like jewels in the sun. The boy's round face broke into a huge grin. He didn't move a muscle. "It likes them!" he whispered. "Mama, it really likes them!"

Mama watched from the doorway with a soft smile. "Native flowers give hummingbirds the sweet food they need," she said. "And they give shelter too." The little bird rested on a thin branch, catching its breath. Then zip! It was off again, sipping flower after flower. The boy watched with sparkling eyes. His garden was not quiet anymore.

Day by day, more visitors arrived. A hummingbird with a ruby throat brought a friend. Small green birds fluttered in the bushes, and yellow ones hopped on the ground. Bees buzzed, and butterflies floated by. The garden filled with color and buzzing wings and cheerful songs. The boy sat quietly, counting each new feathered friend on his fingers.

The boy noticed the birds liked the native flowers best. They sipped from them, hid in them, and sang from the skinny tree. "The right plants bring the right guests," Mama said, tying her apron. The boy nodded slowly. "So if I plant what belongs here," he said, "the wildlife will come and stay?" Mama hugged him. "Exactly," she said. "You are helping them."

That evening the boy sat on the step beside Mama. The sky turned gold, and tiny wings still fluttered among the flowers. "I thought the garden was just for me," he said. "But it's for them too." Mama smiled and smoothed his curly hair. "A garden full of native plants is a gift," she said. "You gave the wildlife a home."

Now the boy has a new morning job. He fills his green watering can and checks every flower. He pulls weeds gently and leaves the native blooms alone. Birds zip and flutter and sing all around him. His gap-toothed smile is wider than ever. "Good morning, hummingbird," he says. "Good morning, everybody."

His garden is small, but it is full of life. Colorful flowers glow, wings buzz, and cheerful songs fill the air. The tiny hummingbird still visits every day, shining like a jewel. The boy knows a happy secret now. When you plant what belongs in your garden, wildlife comes to rest and eat and sing.

And that is why the boy loves his garden more than any place in the world. He sits quietly with his red gloves in his lap, watching the jewel-bright hummingbird hover in the sun. "Native plants help wildlife," he tells anyone who asks. Then he smiles his gap-toothed smile. "And a garden full of friends," he says, "is the happiest garden of all."