

Who's That Lady in My Garden?

LADYBUG



ASIAN LADYB



While nearly everyone recognizes the Native Ladybug, the Asian Lady Beetle is not always recognizable as distinct from the more familiar insect. While sources vary about when, how, and where the Asian Lady Beetle was first introduced in the U.S. the USDA introduced the Asian Lady Beetle as a biological control agent in the 70's. The beetles were not recognized as a problem until the 90's. The insects are spreading throughout most of the U.S. Until this time Asian Lady Beetles seemed desirable because they eat soft-bodied insects such as Aphids, Spider Mites, and Scale. Native Ladybugs on the other hand, cannot be depended upon as they are more inclined to wander from plant to plant without finishing all of pests on each plant. They are content to feed on soft-bodied pests found nearer to the ground. In contrast, Asian Lady Beetles are voracious hunters and will go to the tops of trees and ornamental shrubs such as Crape Myrtles. This feeding habit makes them especially valuable in California as well as in any other state whose income relies heavily on their orchards and vegetable plants.

Eggs are elongated ovals, laid upright in clusters of twenty or so, usually on the underside of leaves. Females locate their eggs near a food source. These insects go through four instars per generation. They eat up to 5,000 aphids during their lifespan and can eat more than fifty species of aphids. Most soft-bodied insects are consumed during their larval stage. Asian Lady Beetles can be a range of colors, from yellow and orange to more rare colors of black and gray. Some Asian Lady Beetles have spots and others have no spots at all.

With all of this variety, how can these beetles be identified? Perhaps the easiest way is to look for more than one characteristic. They have black legs, heads, and antennae. An "M" marking lies just behind the Asian Lady Beetle's head. This signature may be an explicit "M," or the lines can be broken. Another characteristic is the "false eyes" just

behind and to both sides of the head. The Asian Lady Beetle is larger than its native cousin - adults are usually 1/4" long and about 3/16" wide. The life cycle takes 3-4 weeks and there are generally several generations per year.

Seemingly, they are beneficial as they are not poisonous to humans or animals although some people are allergic to fluid excreted from the legs when the insects are handled or are stressed in some other way. Allergies can affect the skin or nasal passages. As with stink bugs, this excretion has a foul odor and can stain clothing and painted surfaces.

Asian Lady Beetles are controversial. Some research has found that the Native Ladybug's population has been reduced, in some areas up to 40%. However, the main objection is that they enter people's houses and other buildings in the fall and stay until spring. By this time, adults have laid eggs in houses or other buildings. In this way, they can easily become a nuisance year-round. Often vast numbers of them cluster before selecting a place to overwinter. Their preference for heights means they may enter vents on the roof, ill-fitting screens, and through gaps along doors and in crevices on the exterior.

Insecticides are not recommended as they are proven to be inefficient. There are a few ways to get rid of or drastically reduce the population. Vacuuming is the preferred method, but it is most efficient when done several times. The Asian Lady Beetle is attracted to light and light-colored buildings. Sometimes they collect on windows and can be removed from there. If vacuumed, empty the unit after each collection procedure as they are likely to escape back into the house.

Sources: Asian Lady Beetles

<https://extension.psu.edu/multicolored-asian-lady-beetle-ladybug>

<https://ipm.ucanr.edu>

<https://ohioline.osu.edu>

<https://extension.wisc.edu>

<https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/ladybeetles>

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