



Lady Beetles in Homes

Family: *Coccinellidae*

Lady beetles, also commonly known as ladybugs or ladybird beetles, are beneficial insects important in the biological control of several serious insect pests. Both the adult beetles and larvae feed upon aphids, scale insects, and mealybugs, all of which can be serious pests of trees, vegetables, and flowers. Several species of lady beetles are collected and sold to growers for control of insect pests. They play an important role in insect pest management.

Description

They are the familiar, small, hemispherical beetles that are generally reddish-orange, tan or yellow, and usually with black spots. The two-spotted lady beetle, *Adalia bipunctata*, a common species that overwinters as an adult, is orange-red in color with one black spot on each wing cover. In New York State, since 1994, the [multicolored Asian lady beetle](#) (*Harmonia axyridis*), has become a common species. It is also called the Asian lady beetle, or the Halloween beetle, and has many color forms, ranging from bright red-orange to pale yellow-orange and with a varying number of spots from many to none.

Problem

Lady beetles sometimes become a nuisance because they are found in homes. In the fall the adult beetles congregate in protected locations to spend the winter. They find their way into the home or buildings through ventilation openings or by crawling under the siding. Normally the beetles remain inactive throughout the cold winter months living on stored fat; however, if sufficiently warmed, they become active. They are attracted by light and fly to windows, especially to those on the sunny side of the house, as they attempt to get outside. Activity also increases with the return of warmer temperatures in the spring.

The beetles do not cause damage to foodstuffs or plants, but can leave a yellow stain on hands or fabrics if crushed or when roughly handled. Most people object to the nuisance factor of having insects moving or flying about indoors, sometimes falling onto the table or other objects.

Management

Physical exclusion, preventing their entry in the first place, is the best way to manage nuisance lady beetles. Seal cracks and openings around windows and doors, openings in siding and around utility pipes, with caulk or silicone or other appropriate patching material. Screen ventilation grids to keep these and other insects such as wasps out.

Indoors the beetles may be easily collected with a vacuum cleaner or gently swept up and disposed of outdoors. Be sure to empty the bag after vacuuming up insects (or they may come out in the storage closet). Sweep gently to avoid alarming the beetles and causing them to discharge the yellow fluid which may stain fabric and wall surfaces. The beetles will disperse outside when warmer temperatures return in the spring in search of prey and egg laying sites. They should not be a problem in the home or other buildings during the summer.

The use of insecticides for control of lady beetles is not recommended.

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