



Pest Control Information Sheet

Ladybirds



Ladybirds are a common garden insect which help control plant pests such as aphids. They don't usually cause any problems and in most cases should not be treated as a pest.

Ladybirds hibernate over winter, emerging in the spring. They produce pheromones, a type of 'perfume' which attracts other ladybirds. This can cause several hundred to gather. This is a natural process – but one we don't often notice.

Insect pheromones are very powerful. They can be detected by other ladybirds up to a 1/4 mile away. This helps ladybirds find each other and helps other ladybirds find a suitable site to over-winter. The pheromones don't go away easily. The chemical "scent" can remain, so ladybirds may return next year to a place where they have gathered before.

The yellow stuff you might see from time to time is blood (hemolymph). It also contains pheromones and it stains. Ladybirds will release blood when they are frightened, this is called reflex bleeding and is one of the ways they protect themselves. The blood smells bad and signals to a predator that this ladybird is likely to have an unpleasant taste.

Our Advice

Keeping windows and doors closed will help prevent ladybirds getting into homes. If they are already inside they can be collected with a soft cloth or brush and released outside.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What do ladybirds eat?

A. Ladybirds eat Aphids. Aphids are soft bodied garden pest that suck the juices out of plants. Ladybirds will also feed on scale insects and plant mites. They do not feed on humans or our pets.

Q. Do Ladybirds bite or sting?

A. All ladybirds can nip, but harlequins seem to bite more than others. Harlequins are a recent invader to our shores. They're bigger, rounder and more aggressive than native ladybirds. More about bites and stings can be found at: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Bites-insect/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Q. Are ladybirds poisonous?

A. No. Ladybirds are not poisonous to humans. However, they can have toxic effects on some animals. Ladybirds have a foul odour which deters some predators from eating them and their bright colours also help as a deterrent.

Q. Why do ladybirds come into my house in the winter time?

A. Ladybirds are attracted to light coloured houses. The ladybirds come in through small cracks around windows and door ways. They want to hibernate in a warm, comfortable spot over the cold months of winter. Ladybirds gather in groups when they hibernate.

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Q. Once the ladybirds are in my house, will they cause damage?

A. No. Ladybirds don't eat fabric, plants, paper or any other household items. Ladybirds do not feed when they hibernate. They live off body fat reserves.

Q. How can I get them out of my house?

A. If you don't have a lot, just leave them. They will leave when spring arrives. Disturbing them will may leave yellow markings on your walls. Ladybirds release a small amount of their blood which is yellow and smells, when they sense danger.

Q. I really want the ladybirds out of my house!

A. Collect them using a soft cloth / duster and release them outside. We don't recommend killing them, but as a last resort they can be killed by using a crawling insect spray or crawling insect powder. If you apply a chemical, collect up the insect you kill and dispose of them in your refuse bin – don't put them into the garden, as the chemical you've used may harm other wildlife.

Q. What should I do if ladybirds swarm in my garden.

A. Leave them alone. Its natural for ladybirds to come together as a swarm at certain times of the year. They do this to protect themselves from some predators. They won't harm plants, or cause damage to surfaces. It's a good idea to keep pets, and children away from them – to protect the ladybirds! Swarms usually disappear after a short time. Never use chemicals to kill ladybirds in the garden. Crawling inspect sprays and powders will harm other wildlife.

Q. I live in a rented house – does my landlord need to provide a pest control treatment?

A. Ladybirds don't cause damage to homes and pose no risk to humans. Landlords do not need to arrange for a pest control treatment. Tenants should either leave them alone, or remove them using a brush or soft cloth.

Services from us.

The Borough Council's Pest Control Service can provide a chemical control treatment if you have a problem with a considerable number of ladybirds inside your home. However our treatment will not prevent ladybirds being attracted again to the same spot.

- To request our help please call 01782 742590 during office hours or see our website.
- Our current charges are detailed on our website at www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk , or available by calling our Customer Services Team on 01782 742590
- Some landlords may pay this charge on your behalf if you live in rented accommodation. .

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