

LADYBIRDS, LADYBEETLES, LADYBUGS

Ladybird is a name that has been used in England for more than 600 years for the European beetle *Coccinella septempunctata*. The lady for whom they were named was the Virgin Mary. Most species of ladybeetles are considered beneficial since they are predators.



*Ladybeetle adult
and pupa*

SIZE |——|
Up to ¼ inch



*2 spotted
lady beetle*

Not all adult ladybeetles are the characteristic orange with black spots (notice the black and red 2-spotted variety of ladybeetle above). Like many beetles, ladybeetles have larvae that look nothing like the adult. Some people believe the larvae look like small orange and black alligators; however, there is great diversity in the ladybeetle family. Sometimes, gardeners mistake the ladybeetle larvae for pests and spray chemical pesticides that kill them. This results in increased problems from real pests.

Ladybeetle larvae are relatively easy to find in your own yard. Simply turn over an aphid infected leaf, and you will likely find them chomping away. The larvae are predators of aphids, mites, mealybugs, scales, whiteflies, leafhoppers, lacebugs, other pest beetles, and caterpillars. Many people who have purchased adult ladybeetles as predators from garden stores have been disappointed with their performance. This is for three reasons. First, adults do not consume nearly as many pest insects as the larvae. Second, adults have no intention of staying in your garden. Companies go to the mountains in the Western U.S. to collect the ladybeetles. They then store them in a refrigerator, waiting for distribution in your local garden center that spring. However, when these ladybeetles awaken, they want to migrate back west and don't particularly care about remaining in your garden to eat pests. Third, many of the ladybeetles collected are not in the best health and may be infested with parasites or diseases that spread among the purchased ladybeetle population. If you are going to purchase ladybeetles, you should buy them in the larval stage from a reputable dealer who raises them in a lab that is free of parasites and diseases.



Ladybeetle larva

From UF featured creatures website at

http://www.entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/beneficial/lady_beetles.htm