

The Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle

In recent years multicolored Asian lady beetle has become a common visitor in and around homes and gardens in Maryland. This lady beetle is a native of Asia and was initially released in California in the early 1900's. It was subsequently released a number of times from 1978 to 1985. From these later releases it became permanently established in the United States.

This lady beetle resembles native lady beetles in appearance. The adults are approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ inch long. They vary in color from pale yellowish brown to bright orange red. The pattern of spots is variable with most adults having 19 on the elytra. Some beetles may have faint spots or none at all. The multicolored Asian lady beetle can be distinguished from other species by a pair of white markings behind the head (on the pronotum) that forms the shape of an "M". The larvae are "alligator-shaped" like most lady beetle larvae. They are black with 2 lateral orange stripes, and covered with small flexible spines. Both larvae and adults feed on aphids and scales. This beetle is primarily a tree inhabitant, but is also found in other habitats such as orchards, field crops, and gardens. It is considered a beneficial insect and can consume large numbers of aphids during its lifetime.

The life cycle from egg to adult takes about a month in warm weather. Eggs hatch in 3-5 days and larvae feed for 12-14 days. Larvae then pupate, which lasts another 5-6 days. Adults can live 2-3 years. Adults overwinter in sheltered sites and mate in the spring.

Its habit of seeking sheltered overwintering sites in the fall has made it a nuisance in and around homes and buildings. Adults apparently secrete an aggregation pheromone, which results in large numbers of beetles gathering at favorable sites. Favorable sites include attics, basements



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and living areas of homes. On warm sunny days during the winter adults may fly towards the windows and be seen walking on walls and ceilings. Do not swat or crush the lady beetles because they release a yellow-orange liquid that can stain fabrics and walls.

Prevention is the best way to manage the problem of beetles entering the home. In late summer and early fall, caulk cracks and seal any entry points around windows and install screening over vents. If the beetles do enter the home, simply vacuum them up and dispose of the bag outdoors.

Adult beetles can also be a pest on ripening fruit such as apples, peaches, grapes (especially wine grapes), etc. No insecticides are currently listed for control of beetles on fruit.

The Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle is considered a beneficial predator and the use of insecticides to control them should be discouraged. Eventually populations will decline due to natural control factors.

Adapted in part from: "Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle", Memorandum by John A. Davidson, 1994. Cooperative Extension Service, Department of Entomology, University of Maryland.

Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle, National Pest Alert, North Central Pest Management Center.

Fact Sheet: The Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle, Information Staff, Agriculture Research Service, USDA, Beltsville, MD, 2000.

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