

Ladybugs

For garden insect control

Quick Tips

1. Keep in refrigerator until ready to release.
2. Moisten garden before release.
3. Release in early evening.

When you get home with your ladybugs, place them in a refrigerator, or other cool place until you are ready to release them. Early evening is the best time to release ladybugs. It gives them all night to settle in, find food and water, and realize they've found a good home (your garden). Ladybugs appreciate moisture to drink. If necessary, sprinkle some water around first before their release. Later on, they'll get most of their moisture needs from eating aphids and other "juicy" plant pests.



Try to release your ladybugs in an area of your garden that you know has an aphid infestation. When food is hard to find, adult ladybugs may fly off, but their eggs then hatch and provide further control. (Both adults and larvae feed on insect pests.) If desired, you can keep ladybug adults from flying by "gluing" their wings shut, temporarily, with a sugar-water solution. Half water and half sugared pop (Coke, Pepsi, etc.), in a spray bottle, works fine. Spray it right in the bag the ladybugs come in. You'll easily coat most of them. After a week or so, the "glue" wears off.

Ladybug eggs look like clusters of little orange footballs, each laid on edge. After hatching, the larvae look like tiny black "alligators", with orange spots. Extremely fast moving, they grow to 1/2" long over 2-3 weeks, then pupate, usually on the top of the leaf, into another adult ladybug. One larva will eat about 400 medium-size aphids during its development to the pupal stage. An adult ladybug may eat over 5,000 aphids during its lifetime (about a year).



For home use, 1,500 ladybugs is usually enough for one application in a small greenhouse or garden.

Of course you will want to avoid spraying with pesticides, both before and after release. (Soapy sprays and botanical pesticides are ok to use if you wait a week before releasing ladybugs.)

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Town & Country Gardens, Inc.

5800 S. Yellowstone Hwy. ▪ Idaho Falls, ID 83402 ▪ 522-5247

1300 East Oak ▪ Pocatello, ID 83201 ▪ 232-7985

www.tcgardens.com