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## Let lucky ladybirds control your garden pests

### Why are ladybirds lucky?

Ladybirds, also known as ladybeetles and ladybugs, are natural controllers of aphids, scale insects and mites which otherwise damage plants. You can be sure that if your garden has regular ladybird visitors it will receive a helping hand keeping healthy.

This is probably why nearly all cultures believe that ladybirds are lucky. Killing one is said to bring sadness and misfortune. The nursery rhyme "Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home" encourages children to catch the beetles and blow them on their way in return for a wish. It is thought this was a way of getting the children to disperse the beetles amongst the crops to destroy pests.

### What ladybirds like and dislike

#### Ladybirds love:

- to gorge themselves on aphids, even ladybird larvae can eat up to 350 aphids during the three weeks it takes to become a pupa.
- many herbs such as coriander, dill and fennel.
- lots of water and often seek out places with water.
- bright colours and spots which they wear to keep predators away.



#### But they don't like:

- insecticides. Even using low toxic environmentally friendly insecticides, such as pyrethrum or garlic spray to kill aphids, will also kill natural predators like ladybirds. And if the majority of their food source is gone they won't visit your garden meaning you have to spray again year after year.
- the cold weather when they remain in a dormant state. As the weather warms up the adults begin to get active and search for early aphids to eat.

### Be a ladybird buddy

#### Try to:

- [build your own Ladybird House](#). These houses shelter and protect ladybirds through the cooler months and provide a spot for them to lay eggs.
- reduce or eliminate insecticides.
- water your plants to provide ladybirds with a drink. Try to water early in the morning or late in the evening to avoid losing water from the heat of the day.
- plant herbs that ladybirds love near plants affected by aphids.
- offer ladybirds a tasty brew of honey mixed with water and brewer's yeast.
- purchase ladybirds for your garden pests from [www.ecoorganicgarden.com.au](http://www.ecoorganicgarden.com.au)
- breed your own ladybirds! Find an aphid infested plant and break a portion off. Keep some ladybirds in a plastic container with a lid containing small air holes with the infected branch. Place a water soaked cotton ball in the container as a water supply. Make sure your ladybirds always have plenty of food and water.

#### Avoid:

- using insecticides in your garden.
- killing any ladybirds as this is said to bring sadness and misfortune.

#### Don't be surprised if ladybirds:

- release a yellow substance. This is called "reflex blood". It is very strong smelling and contains the toxins which make ladybirds off-putting to so many predators. Ladybirds do not die after producing reflex blood; it is part of their warning system.
- are found in large aggregations. To keep warm in the cooler months, they huddle together in large groups and hibernate.

### Did you know?

- There are over 500 species of ladybirds in Australia. ID your ladybirds at Ladybirds of Australia website [www.ento.csiro.au/biology/ladybirds/ladybirds.htm](http://www.ento.csiro.au/biology/ladybirds/ladybirds.htm)



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A pair of Variable Ladybirds *Coccinella septempunctata* with some tasty fresh aphids.  
Photo: [oz.wildlife](http://oz.wildlife)



- As ladybirds age, the color of their spots fades.
- In a lifetime, a female ladybird will lay as many as 2,000 eggs.
- A ladybird in flight can flap its wings up to 85 times per second.
- Ladybirds breathe through openings on the sides of their bodies.
- In 1991, 15 young ladybirds and aphids up in the space shuttle to test their movements in zero gravity.