

The Multi-Colored Asian Lady Beetle: A good bug with some bad habits



The multi-colored Asian lady beetle (*Harmonia axyridis* Pallas) is a native of Asia and is relatively new to Michigan. Like many exotic species, it has readily adapted to climates and habitats in the U.S. As with most lady beetles, it is a highly beneficial predator of insect pests, feeding mainly on aphids. It therefore helps protect gardens and crops from these and other pests.

Asian lady beetles create trouble when populations build up and large numbers enter buildings in the fall to hibernate. During warm winter days and in early spring, the beetles wake up and crawl into areas often inhabited by people. Since lady beetles are a significant natural defense against aphids and other pests, it is important to correctly identify the Asian lady beetle and use restraint with the use of pesticides or other management tactics.

Distinguishing Asian lady beetles from other lady beetles

The adult is oval-shaped and about ¼-inch long. The color of its back ranges from mustard-yellow to bright red-orange but may be almost entirely black. The number of black spots on its back may vary from zero to over 20.



Distinguishing feature: The area on the insect's back just behind the head is straw-colored with four black spots that merge to form a "W" shape when viewed from the front or an "M" when viewed from behind (see picture at right where we've abstracted the "M" shape).



Want to learn more?

Additional information for homeowners and fruit growers is available at this MSU Extension web site:

<http://www.msue.msu.edu/ipm/asianladybeetle.htm>

Information and support: Michigan State University Extension, Center for Integrated Plant Systems, and Michigan Dept. of Agric.