



Multicolored Asian Ladybird Beetle in Virginia

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Introduction

Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle (MALB; *Harmonia axyridis*) belongs to the group of beetles often called ladybugs, ladybird beetles, or lady beetles (Coleoptera: Coccinellidae). Like other lady beetles, adult MALB are somewhat oval in shape with a strongly convex dorsal surface and a flattened ventral side. The head and thorax of adult MALB are black with light-colored markings. The wing covers range in color from light orange to a dark red or even black (Fig. 1). Usually, the beetles have multiple black spots, but they are sometimes absent. Dark colored individuals may have yellow or orange spots.



Figure 1. Multicolored Asian ladybird beetles (Gyorgy Csoka, Hungary Forest Research Institute, Bugwood.org).

MALB larvae, like the larvae of other lady beetles, are often described as being “alligator-like” (Fig. 2). They are elongated with orange markings on a dark body and numerous spines or tubercles on the dorsal side. They actively move about on vegetation searching for prey. Outdoors, both adults and larvae are beneficial predators of soft-bodied insect pests such as aphids, caterpillars, scales, and insect eggs. Adult MALB are considered pests when they enter houses and other buildings in the fall while seeking protected places to overwinter (Fig. 3).



Figure 2. Multicolored Asian ladybird beetle (left) and pupa (right) (Ansel Oommen, Bugwood.org).



Figure 3. Multicolored Asian ladybird beetles (Bruce Watt, University of Maine, Bugwood.org).

Control of MALB in Houses

Adult MALB enter houses through small openings around windows, doors, and utility access points. In addition, they can enter houses through cracks in the siding and trim and through attic vents. Sealing those entry sites is the best method to keep MALB out of a house. Conduct a thorough energy audit of your house because any places where cold air can enter the house are also places where MALB can gain access. Fill all cracks and leaks with a fine quality silicone or silicone-latex caulk. Once inside, insecticides are not recommended against MALB except for severe cases. Sweep the beetles up with a

broom and dustpan, including all beetles that collect in windowsills and on walls. Beetles can also be picked up with a vacuum cleaner, but bags will need to be discarded so that beetles do not escape back into the living areas. Do not use a flyswatter or otherwise crush the beetles as they can leave an unsightly orange stain on carpets, drapes, and walls.

MALB Control Check List

- Seal windows and doors with weather stripping.
- Check attic and basement for possible entry sites.
- Check utility and pipe access points to the house.
- Check window screens for holes and gaps.
- Seal cracks and crevices in house siding.
- Use a vacuum cleaner to pick up beetles.
- If spraying for beetles inside, remove the dead beetles with a vacuum cleaner.
- Empty the vacuum cleaner canister if beetles are in it.
- Seal between logs if residence is a log home.

Life History

MALB typically start entering houses in early fall and have an obvious peak of activity around October 15, in Virginia. They are quite active on warm days in the fall and winter. Usually they cluster in wall voids or crawlspaces indoors, but they do not reproduce or establish inside the house. They have a second peak of activity in late March as they enter the living quarters of the house in an attempt to find their way outside. The heated portions of the house are simply too warm and dry for their survival and the beetles die in a few days.

History in the U.S.

The USDA released MALB many times between 1916 and 1985 as a potential biological control agent against aphids and scale insects. In those trials, the beetle was not recovered after the release, so it was assumed that it had not established and was incompatible with North American conditions.

In 1988, MALB was first recorded as a pest in Louisiana in houses close to ports used for

international shipping, including cargo containers from Asia. MALB may have established from earlier intentional releases as a biological control agent, or from beetles that hitchhiked from Asia.

History in Virginia

Despite persistent rumors to the contrary, Virginia Tech did not release MALB in Virginia. MALB was first detected in Lee County, Virginia, in January 1993. By fall of 1993 approximately 40 counties, covering all geographical regions of the state, had new county records of MALB. By the late 1990s it was not only statewide in distribution but also covered much of the United States as well.

Revised

Theresa A. Dellinger, 2020, and 16 July 2025.

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2025

444-275 (ENTO-618NP)