

LivingWithBugs Guide

identification, life cycles and management

Harmonia axyridis

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In the mid-1980s a lady beetle named *Harmonia axyridis* (common name: multicolored Asian lady beetle) was intentionally introduced into the U.S. from Japan. The intention was to introduce a new beneficial predator. It is a good predator of aphids that feed high in trees. Our native species are not fond of tree-feeding aphids as anyone with a birch, tulip, maple or oak tree knows. By mid-summer these trees are usually dripping with aphid honeydew.

In the eastern U.S. *Harmonia* has been doing a good job controlling aphids in pecan orchards and has spread up and down the east coast. Indeed, the beetle has become the dominant lady beetle species in many parts of the US.

The “multicolored” part of the common name refers to the many different color forms, or variants, that this beetle exhibits (Fig. 1). Most commonly, the beetle is orange with black spots or it may be black with four red spots at the corners. The larvae are a distinctive black, white and yellow.

Most native western U.S. lady beetles spend winter months in the foothills of the Cascade,

Coast Range or Sierra Nevada Mts. In the spring they leave their winter homes to return to lower elevations to lay eggs that begin the next generation. Many generations may be produced each spring and summer but the adults always return to the mountains in the fall.

Harmonia is different. This species prefers to remain at low elevations all winter, often congregating in large numbers in attics, barns, sheds, anywhere that’s dry and relatively dark, in the fall. This behavior makes them a nuisance. On warm, late-winter days the beetles may become active and fly to windows.

Control of nuisance beetles. First of all, they do no harm. Their droppings can be messy, however, especially early in the fall when they first enter houses, and they have an odor that may be objectionable. They will not reproduce indoors, they won’t feed on anything. They will leave in the spring if given the chance. What’s more, your yard trees will be forever grateful. Most people use a vacuum

cleaner to eliminate beetles indoors.

See www.LivingWithBugs.com for additional information.

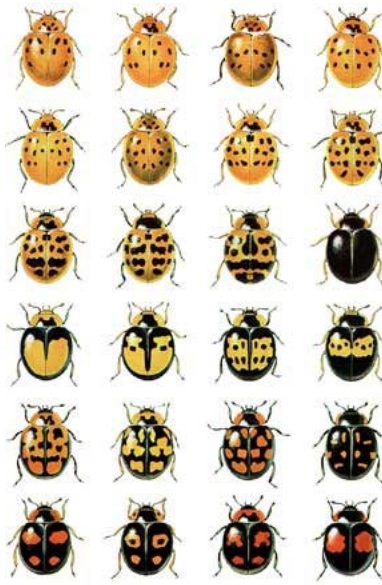


Figure 1. Color variants of *Harmonia axyridis*. Original plate from Ayala, F. J. 1978. The Mechanisms of Evolution. Sci. Am. Sept., Vol. 239.