

Ladybugs Are Knocking at the Door

Like holiday visitors that overstay their welcome, ladybugs are back. They aren't looking for a short stay, but a warm place to overwinter until things warm up outside. Then they'll be back to that cute little bug that gardeners love to see working in their gardens.

If these guys have covered the side of your house like they have mine, you know what I'm talking about. These are Asian lady beetles also called Halloween beetles. Asian lady beetles can't survive freezing temperatures, so when they feel the onset of winter they begin hunting places to hunker down.

Like all lady bugs, Asian lady beetles are beneficial insects. They are particularly important in that they feed on aphids that attack woody plants. Not all lady bugs will do that. The Asian lady beetle will feed on aphids that attack pecans and crepe myrtles and even roses.

That being said, these lady beetles can be a nuisance because each fall they find their way, through the tiniest of openings into our homes. Window seals and ceiling vents are popular places to hang out. The best advice for large numbers in your home is a vacuum cleaner. If you go swatting at them or mashing them you might find yellow stains on walls or furniture difficult to remove because they have yellow blood.

It's hard to keep lady bugs out. Try to seal any openings around windows and doors. If you vacuum or sweep them up, releasing them in wooded area may encourage them to find shelter there rather than come back to your house. As soon as spring returns, lady beetles will be back doing what we like to see them do – eating up the bad guys that like to destroy our gardens.

And by the way, if you were wondering, lady bugs don't bite, sting, carry diseases, or chew on wood, clothing or food items.