



## These ladybugs are driving me crazy!

*Howard Russell, MSU – Diagnostic Services*

*Chris DiFonzo, MSU – Department of Entomology*

People throughout Michigan have experienced hundreds, sometimes thousands, of ladybeetles in their homes over the last few years. This ladybeetle is the Multicolored Asian Ladybeetle (for short, Asian ladybeetle), *Harmonia axyridis*.

This insect is a native of Asia. Despite popular rumors, the beetle was not released by the DNR, MDA, USDA, MSU, or chemical companies. Although there were several attempts in the late 1970s to introduce the beetle into the southeastern United States to help control aphids on pecan trees, none of these deliberate attempts succeeded. It now appears that the beetle became established after ‘jumping ship’ at a port somewhere along the Gulf coast. Since then it has spread rapidly throughout the US and southern Canada. It was first found in Ontario in 1992 and in Michigan in the late 1980s or early 1990s. One reason that might explain their large numbers is an increase in their food supply, aphids. In 2000, a new pest, the soybean aphid, was found in the Midwest. Asian ladybeetles are now found in large numbers in soybean fields consuming soybean aphids.

During the summer, Asian ladybeetles are beneficial, eating aphids in crops, flower gardens, and on trees. But after the first cold snap in the fall, beetle behavior changes. They congregate on the sides of buildings and may enter homes to spend the winter. Because our homes are heated, the beetles remain active throughout the winter. Despite what you hear, the beetles do not breed or reproduce indoors. In the spring, the beetles become more active as the weather warms, and look for ways out of walls and ceilings. Since the beetles are drawn to light, hundreds may be found around windows at this time.

### Here are some options for dealing with Asian ladybeetles

In the fall, they may be prevented from entering homes by caulking or sealing cracks and crevices around windows, doors, and other entry points. This can be difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish in some homes.

Beetle numbers may be further reduced by applying insecticides around probable entry points outside the home, such as windows, doors, soffits, etc. The Asian ladybeetle is NOT a protected species (another popular rumor). Homeowners who choose to spray their homes may want to hire a professional pest control company to treat the building exterior. The treatments need to be made in late September or early October when the first beetles appear on the building, so be prepared after the first cold snap. Do-it-yourselfers can use permethrin (sold under a variety of brand names), cyfluthrin (sold as Bayer Advanced Home Insect Control or Bayer Advanced Garden Insect Control), or one of the Ortho products sold for this use. Before treating the house, spray a small test area to make sure the insecticide does not stain the siding or paint. Be sure to read and follow all directions on the pesticide label. Spraying the outsides of homes will, no doubt, involve spraying above one’s head. Be sure to wear protective clothing such as a wide-brimmed hat and raincoat. Eye goggles are a must.

If sealing or treating the exterior walls does not help, then consider caulking around outlet and switch boxes, ceiling fixtures, heat ducts and other openings in interior walls.

This will at least keep the beetles in the walls and out of the living space.

Inside the home, they can be removed by simply using a vacuum cleaner or dust buster. Be advised that this may cause your vacuum cleaner to smell bad like the lady beetles. Another option is to use an insect light trap, since the beetles are attracted to light. A reasonably-priced light trap is available from Gardeners Supply at <http://www.gardeners.com/> (click on the link for pest control on the left side of the page) or call 1-888-833-1412. This trap comes with natural pheromone lures, which are probably not needed to catch the beetles. The black light should be all that's required to do the job. For do-it-yourselfers, the USDA has plans for a homemade version of a light trap at <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/br/lbeetle/001030.trap.pdf>.

Insecticides registered for indoor use can be applied around baseboards and windows inside the home. Note that these treatments will not kill beetles inside walls and ceilings, and that you still need to vacuum up the dead insects.

A final option is to do nothing and try to tolerate the beetles until they have either left the home, or died inside the walls as the temperatures increase.



MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity institution. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, or family status. • Issued in furtherance of Extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Tom Coon, Extension Director, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, MI 48824. • This information is for education purposes only. References to commercial products or trade names do not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned.