



CARE INFO

Ladybugs



Did you know that the ladybug is a beetle?

Getting Started

- Materials: Plant mister or plastic spray bottle filled with water.
- Your ladybugs are *Hippodamia convergens* species. You may release them directly from their mesh bag or from a habitat.
- Remove ladybugs from their shipping container. Spray their mesh bag with water. Place bag in refrigerator until you are ready to observe or release them (up to three weeks). Spray them once every week.

Habitat

- Keep your ladybugs in the refrigerator until you are ready to observe them.
- Materials: (1) three or four large, clear jars or other suitable containers, (2) an old stocking or dish towel, (3) rubber bands, (4) twigs and leaves.
- Cut pieces of cloth large enough to cover jar openings. Put leaves and twigs in jars. Sprinkle leaves very lightly with water. Do not allow water to collect in the bottoms of the jars.
- Pour ladybugs into jars, dividing them into roughly equal amounts. Place stocking or cloth over openings and secure with rubber bands.
- Keep ladybugs in their jars for 3 to 5 days. Sprinkle leaves very lightly every day. Be careful not to drown your beetles! Add fresh leaves if necessary.
- Release ladybugs after no more than 5 days in the classroom. They'll be hungry and will need to search for food.

Observation

- Materials: (1) ladybugs, (2) pencils and crayons or markers, (3) paper, (4) magnifying glass.
- Look at body parts: head, thorax, abdomen, pronotum (a plate on the upper thorax), 6 legs, 2 antenna, 2 wing covers, 2 wings. Turn a ladybug upside down to see its thorax and abdomen.

Observation *continued*

- Look at behavior: crawling, hiding, raising and lowering wing covers.
- Compare: Wrap one jar in a dark towel or put it in a closet for a day. Then bring it into the light and compare it with another jar. Is anything different?
- Experiment: Ladybugs are carnivores; they eat aphids, whiteflies, other tiny insects and insect eggs. Are your ladybugs hungry enough to try something different? Cut several raisins in half and drop some in each jar. (The sweet syrup in a raisin is a little bit like aphids' sugary secretions.)
- Write about ladybugs. What kind of animal are they (insect, beetle)? What do they look like? What are their body parts? What is their habitat like? What are they doing? What do you think they eat (aphids mostly, and other small insects). Why do they like them?
- Draw and color ladybugs.
- Learn the names of ladybug body parts.

Release

- You may release ladybugs directly from their mesh bag or from habitats. If your ladybugs are refrigerated, allow them a few hours to come to room temperature. Be prepared: bugs will crawl up your arms and into your clothing!
- Release at the end of your school day in a shady place near trees, shrubs or bushes. Rose bushes are excellent ladybug habitat.
- Pour into students' hands. Blow on ladybugs to make them fly away or scoot them one at a time onto a fingertip and brush them off onto a leaf or tree trunk.