



Ladybugs

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 a refrigerator until you are ready to observe or release (refrigerated ladybugs should live for six weeks or longer). Spray them once every two weeks.

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 dishtowel, (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 on 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 (optional)
- *Look* at body parts: head, thorax, abdomen, pronotum (a plate on the upper thorax), 6 legs, 2 antenna, two wing covers, two wings. Turn a ladybug upside down to see its thorax and abdomen.
- *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 the other jar. Is anything different?
- *Experiment:* Ladybugs are carnivores; they eat aphids, white flies, 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 you like them?
- *Draw And Color* ladybugs.

- *Handout:* Learn the names of ladybug body parts.

Ladybug lesson plan, songs & activities, bug glossary, life cycle and links to more at www.earthsbirthday.org/butterflies/ladybugs/

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.
- Release at the end of your school day in a shady place near trees, shrubs or bushes. Rose bushes are excellent ladybug habitat.
- Take ladybugs outdoors. Knock bugs away from top of bag and cut label off. Be prepared: bugs will crawl up your arms and into your clothing!
- Pour bugs into students' hands. Blow on ladybugs to make them fly away—or scoot them one at a time onto a finger tip and brush them off onto a leaf or tree trunk.
- *Look* closely to see wing covers lift and wings appear.
- Ladybugs will soon disperse to look for food. Come back to your release site the next day to see if you can find any.



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Handout

- Ladybugs are **beetles**, a kind of **insect**. Like all insects, they have three main parts—head [6], thorax and abdomen—six legs [2] and two antennae [5].
- Like all beetles, ladybugs have two fragile wings and two protective wing covers [1]. Wing covers are also called “elytra.” They are made of chitin, just like human fingernails.
- Just behind the ladybug’s tiny head is the “pronotum” [7]. The pronotum is a part of the thorax that helps protect the head and eyes [4].

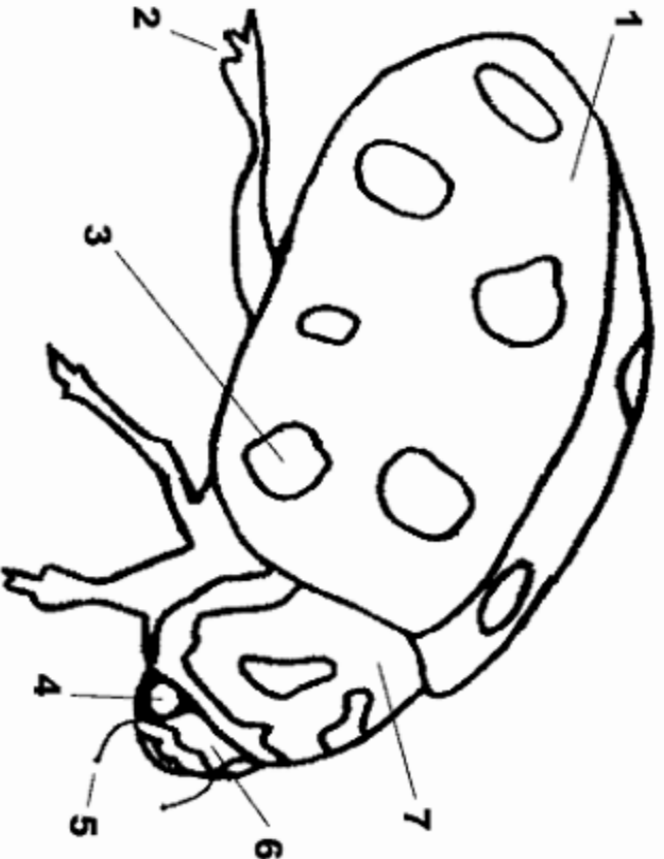
Key: 1. Wing Cover (or Elytrum) · 2. Leg · 3. Spot · 4. Eye · 5. Antenna · 6. Head · 7. Pronotum.

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Ladybugs

Did you know?

- Ladybugs touch, hear and smell with their antennae. They also smell with the tips of their legs.
- When ladybugs fly, they flap their wings 85 times a second!
- There are about 4,300 kinds of ladybugs. They have yellow, pink, red, tan or black wing covers. Some don’t have spots. Some have lots.
- Red or pink wing covers warn birds that ladybugs don’t taste good.



1. _____ 5. _____
2. _____ 6. _____
3. _____ 7. _____
4. _____ Name _____