

Tips How to Care for Live Ladybugs

Plan Ahead! Schedule “*Looking at Ladybugs*” (fall OR spring) or “*Ladybugs to the Rescue*” (spring) to coincide with delivery of your live ladybugs.

Ordering Live Ladybugs

Use the attached voucher to order live ladybugs at no cost to you. Your ladybugs should arrive 3 or 4 days after your order is received.

Receiving Ladybugs

Your ladybugs are *Hippodamia convergens*, a species that is native everywhere in North America. Since they will be shipped as living adults, they will need to be released OR taken care of as soon as you receive them. Here’s how:

Storing Ladybugs

Ladybugs are remarkably resilient creatures that can live in nature for several seasons. In artificial situations—like the classroom—they need special care. If you can’t or don’t want to release your ladybugs immediately, follow four steps to extend their “shelf life.” Follow all four steps for best results, but if you are in a hurry and/or don’t have all the materials available, then steps 1 and 2 are the recommended minimum steps for storage over a period of **2 to 4 days**.

- 1. Separate** your single shipment of approximately 500 ladybugs into two or more smaller containers (about 100–250 ladybugs per container). The ladybugs would appreciate materials placed inside of the containers (e.g., shredded paper or folded pieces of cardboard) to help separate them further.
- 2. Provide a water source** in the form of a folded wet paper towel or a fresh, well-rinsed sponge (free of soap residues and wetting agents). **CAUTION:** Water droplets endanger the ladybugs. Take care that the water source is damp but not dripping.

Note: The ladybugs will get enough water from a folded wet paper towel; a clean fresh well-rinsed sponge; or a cotton ball moistened with dilute honey water (or Sprite soda). They will survive another day or two longer if the container is humid. The small holes in the bug jar lid will prevent evaporation. The container should not be soggy, nor contain any droplets of water. Remove any dead beetles and keep the container free of excrement by wiping down the sides of the container with a damp paper towel.



Did You know?

- Ladybugs lay tiny, yellow oval eggs in upright clusters of 10 to 50 on undersides of leaves.
- Ladybugs are the most commonly known of all beneficial insects.
- Convergent ladybugs—a native, renewable, sustainable resource found throughout North America—are collected in huge numbers in their mass overwintering sites in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

3. Ensure cool temperatures of around 50–60 degrees F. An evenly cool, shady place will do, but a beverage cooler is better. Refrigerators are okay too, but their cooler temps can place extra stress on your ladybugs.

4. Provide food. Aphids (plant lice) are always welcomed by ladybugs, but they’re usually not available except during the spring/summer growing season. You can make artificial diets that can help extend the life of the insects. See this Web link for directions: www.mda.state.mn.us/biocon/plantscape/artificialdiet.htm

Releasing Ladybugs

Ladybugs are active in warmth and light. If you release them on plants in your classroom or garden, the best times are early in the morning or late at night so the ladybugs will stay on the plants as long as possible and feed on the pest insects that are present.

If you are releasing them on outdoor plants in the fall, a sunny day is best so they can find overwintering sites.

