

Have you seen me? ➡
Who am I
No, then what?



Ok hundreds of me!!!
A Lady bug?
A beetle?

Questions and answers about this relatively new 'bug' in Michigan

From the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

What is the correct name of this insect?

It has been called the multi-colored Asian ladybird beetle, multi-colored Asian ladybug, Asian lady beetle and even the Halloween beetle. The name we are most familiar with is multi-colored Asian lady beetle.

Where did the multi-colored Asian lady beetle come from?

This insect is native to northeastern Asia.

If these are 'Asian Lady Beetles, how did they wind up in Michigan? (Bad travel agent?)

In the early 1980's the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) introduced them into the southeast US to kill aphids and other pests that damage pecan trees. According to USDA scientists, they were unsuccessful in their attempt to establish the beetle. However, in 1988 an established population was discovered in Louisiana, near New Orleans. The Asian lady beetle was first officially reported in Michigan in 1994 but has probably been present since the early 1990's. Today, it can probably be found in all 83 Michigan counties.

Are these insects doing some good for something, or are they just hanging around my house when it gets warm? These ladybugs control a group of insects called aphids. When aphids feed, they damage plants. Aphids also transmit many plant diseases. Ladybugs are efficient and effective in killing aphids of all kinds. The presence of a ladybug population controlling aphids means less insecticide use and a greater profit after harvest. Additionally, the multi-colored Asian lady beetle aggressively pursues these plant pests that attack trees; more so than our native ladybugs. In 2000, the soybean aphid, an exotic aphid from China, was discovered feeding on soybean plants in Michigan. The Asian lady beetle fed heavily on the soybean aphids and likely saved Michigan soybean farmers millions of dollars in harvest revenues.

Why do so many multi-colored Asian lady beetles show up in and on my house in the fall and sometimes -- lasting right into spring?

In the fall of the year, multi-colored Asian lady beetles begin to seek out places where they will spend the winter hibernating. They require some place that will stay cool and dry and offer a place to hide. They are most commonly found gathering in the fall on the sun-facing exposure of the building --usually a southern exposure. This activity often results in the beetles getting into the inhabited portions of the building. In the spring, they will leave.

If the multi-colored Asian lady beetle hibernates all winter, why do I get them in my house in the winter? Even on cold winter days there are often times when the wind is calm and it is sunny. On these days, especially on your homes southern exposures, the temperature may get near 50 degrees. If this occurs, some beetles will wake up and begin crawling around. Some or many will then find their way into inhabited areas of the house.

When they get into the house during the winter, I see many of them gathered on and around windows. How and why do they end up there? These insects generally move toward the light or towards the window in this case. Insects also have very small brains. They can't figure out glass and why they can see the outdoors, but can't get there! They have found their way into your living area and generally end up on the window looking for a way out.

I had one of these beetles crawling around on my arm, and I think it bit me. Do they all bite?

Some bite, most do not. Sometimes the Asian lady beetles bite skin, but often this stinging sensation is actually caused by small spurs on the beetle's legs pricking skin as they move and evaluate whether or not the skin is a food source. The beetle does not carry disease. In most cases, the pain is short lived. If the bite concerns you, apply antiseptic to the site.

I heard that if you crush one of these beetles or have enough of them inside your home they give off an unpleasant odor. Is that true?

When multi-colored Asian lady beetles are agitated they give off a yellowish fluid that has a faint, foul odor. This is a defensive reaction to ward off predators. The liquid is from its legs and it can stain.

Could I be allergic to the multi-colored Asian lady beetle?

Yes, it is possible to have an allergic reaction to the multi-colored Asian lady beetle. Over exposure has been reported to cause allergic reactions in some people.

Do they cause any damage to the house; get into food, that sort of thing?

Multi-colored Asian lady beetles are harmless. They cause no harm to a home or its contents, including people and pets. However, when they show up inside the house by the dozens or hundreds, they usually wear out their welcome.

What can I do to control them around the house, and better yet, keep them out of the house in the first place?

Outdoors preventative tactics

In the early fall, monitor the sunlit side of your home for swarming beetles. These are areas where they will collect prior to moving into hibernation sites. You can apply an insecticide registered for outdoor use. If it is practical, caulk obvious cracks and spaces where the beetles can gain access, check attic vent screens and repair if necessary, caulk wherever a pipe, conduit, telephone or cable TV wire goes through the siding, and ensure that the weather seal on basement windows is tight.

Indoors preventative tactics

Another key to prevention is to conduct the same inspection on your inside walls and make repairs, where necessary. You can use an insecticide indoors, but we don't recommend it as in the winter your furnace is often running. That means the house is closed up and the insecticide may be re-circulated throughout the home. Additionally, when the bugs you have sprayed die, you will have to clean them up anyway. That is why we suggest using a vacuum to eliminate the beetles.

For more information Asian Lady Beetles and other environmental concerns, visit our website at www.bhsj.org or call our local Community Health Agency offices at:

Coldwater – 279-9561 ext. 106

Hillsdale – 437-7395 ext. 111

Three Rivers 273-2161 ext. 233

Your local Health Department