

december 2022

JOY // LADYBUG // PERIWINKLE

The ladybug is a bright beetle with visual charm – a good luck symbol in many cultures. The most common species in North America, brought from Europe in the mid-1900s, boasts a shiny red body with seven black spots.

Technically, ladybugs aren't bugs – they're beetles. The 400,000 or so species of beetles make up a quarter of all animal life on earth! About 5,000 of these are ladybugs. Like other insects, beetles have two pairs of wings, but their front pair forms a hard shell. The back pair is used to fly. Also, beetles have four developmental stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult.

A ladybug's bold colors attract many human fans. Those bright colors and spots are designed to ward off predators. These cute critters can also secrete foul-tasting fluid from their joints, if their appearance isn't warning enough.

Ladybugs are highly valued because they help control populations of aphids, which can destroy crops. Farmers and gardeners love them! A female ladybug deposits her eggs near aphid colonies. When these hatch, the larvae eat lots and lots of aphids. Adults eat them too. Over its lifetime, a ladybug can consume 5,000 aphids.

Ladybugs are prized around the world. In England, they are called ladybird beetles. And the French call them "Bête à bon dieu" – beasts of the good God.

Just before winter, however, not everyone is happy to see large numbers trying to get inside houses and apartments. Why do ladybugs gather on windowsills? They are simply looking for a warm safe place to overwinter. When spring comes, they'll be ready to get back to life outside, eating those aphids.

***JOY:** Finding a way to be happy, even when things don't go your way*



Ladybugs eat harmful insects and are considered symbols of good luck.