

ALL ABOUT LADYBUGS

Bright spots, tiny wings, and big jobs—
discover the amazing world of ladybugs!

A NONFICTION UNIT



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MEET THE LADYBUGS!

Look closely—a little red beetle with black spots crawls across a leaf. It's a ladybug! **Ladybugs** are helpful insects that gardeners love. They may look cute and tiny, but they work hard to protect plants by eating pests.





WHAT LADYBUGS ARE LIKE

Ladybugs are **beetles**. Most ladybugs are red with black spots, but some are yellow, orange, black, or even pink. They have six legs, two antennae, and two sets of wings. The hard outer wings, called **elytra**, protect the soft flying wings underneath.



WHERE LADYBUGS LIVE

Ladybugs live in gardens, forests, grasslands, and even inside homes during winter. They prefer places with plenty of plants and tiny insects to eat. They are found on every continent except Antarctica. During cold months, many ladybugs gather together in large groups to stay warm.

FROM EGG TO LADYBUG

Ladybugs grow in four stages. A female lays tiny yellow eggs on the underside of leaves. The eggs hatch into long, spiky larvae that look nothing like adult ladybugs. The **larva** then attaches to a leaf and forms a **pupa**. After some time, an adult ladybug emerges, dries its wings, and begins exploring. This whole process is called **metamorphosis**.



HOW LADYBUGS COMMUNICATE

Ladybugs have simple but clever ways of sending messages. They use smell, sensed through their **antennae**, to find food and friends. When danger is near, they release chemicals to warn other ladybugs. Their bright colors also send a message: "Don't eat me—I taste bad!"



WHAT LADYBUGS EAT

Ladybugs love to eat **aphids**, tiny insects that can harm plants. A single ladybug can eat up to 50 aphids a day. They also eat mites, insect eggs, and small pests. When insects are hard to find, some ladybugs enjoy pollen and nectar as well.





LIFE ON THE LEAF

Ladybugs spend most of their time on plants. They crawl across leaves searching for food and rest in sunny spots to warm their bodies. They are excellent helpers in gardens, keeping plants healthy and free from pests.





KEEPING SAFE

Ladybugs use clever tricks to protect themselves. Their bright colors warn **predators** that they taste bad. When threatened, they can play dead to avoid being eaten, or release a smelly yellow liquid from their legs. Their small size also helps them hide under leaves and in tiny spaces.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Some ladybugs have no spots at all.
- There are more than 5,000 species of ladybugs.
- Not all ladybugs are female —“ladybug” is just a name!



QUESTION TIME!

1. (True or False) Ladybugs are beetles.
2. (True or False) All ladybugs are red with black spots.
3. (True or False) Ladybugs go through metamorphosis.
4. (Fact or Opinion) Ladybugs eat aphids.
5. (Fact or Opinion) Ladybugs are the cutest insects.
6. What do ladybugs eat?
7. How do ladybugs stay safe?
8. What are elytra?
9. Where do ladybugs lay their eggs?
10. Why do gardeners like ladybugs?



ANSWERS



1. True. Ladybugs are beetles.
2. False. Ladybugs come in many colors and patterns.
3. True. They grow from egg to larva to pupa to adult.
4. Fact. Ladybugs really do eat aphids.
5. Opinion. "Ladybugs are the cutest insects" is a personal belief.
6. They eat aphids, mites, insect eggs, and sometimes pollen.
7. They use bright colors, play dead, hide, and release smelly liquid.
8. Elytra are the hard outer wings that protect their flying wings.
9. They lay eggs on the underside of leaves.
10. Gardeners like ladybugs because they eat pests that harm plants.

GLOSSARY

Antennae – feelers on an insect's head used for smelling and sensing

Aphid – a tiny insect that feeds on plants

Beetle – an insect with hard protective wings

Elytra – the hard outer wings of beetles

Larva – the young stage of a ladybug, before the pupa

Metamorphosis – a big change in body form as an animal grows

Ladybug – a small beetle with a round body and spots

Pupa – the stage where the larva transforms into an adult

Predator – an animal that hunts or eats other animals



FUN WITH LADYBUGS

Q: Why was the ladybug always invited to the garden parties?

A: Because it was such a spot-tacular guest!