

Lady Beetle

A CAROLINA™ CareSheet

Habitat setup and maintenance

A soft-sided cage such as our Carolina Butterfly Sanctuary (item #674291) works best, or you can construct your own cage, making sure that it has holes in the top for ventilation. Place the habitat where the lady beetles can receive indirect or room light. They should be kept at 65° F (18° C) or higher. To maintain humidity, place moist foliage or a damp paper towel inside the habitat. This also supplies them with a source of water.

If you plan to refrigerate your beetles, providing vials of sugar water, each with a lid punched for a cotton wick, may help the beetles survive. However, beetles received after the last frost, but before June, should not be stored in the refrigerator. They have used up their stores of fat and need to begin actively feeding. To culture the convergent lady beetle, you must feed it aphids. If aphids are scarce, feed presoaked raisins or other sweet, non-acidic fruits. Soak fruit until swollen, then halve. Remove any uneaten fruit before it molds. This will sustain lady beetles for a few weeks, but they will not lay eggs until they have received a source of protein (usually supplied by aphids). Carolina also supplies an artificial diet (item #144230) with mixing instructions.

FAQ's

What do I feed my lady beetles if aphids are not available?

Mites, other small insects, or nectar. Sugar-water solution is a short-term option; add 2 tablespoons of sugar to 1 cup of spring water. Pour about ½ oz of this solution into a 1-oz bottle. Roll up a small piece of paper towel and push it into the bottle until it extends about 1 cm into the solution. About 1–1½ cm of the towel should protrude from the bottle. The towel forms a wick on which the lady beetle can feed.

Are all lady beetles female?

No. There are both male and female lady beetles, and distinguishing them from one another can be a challenge. Females are usually larger than males.

What is the yellow liquid being released from my lady beetles?

When they feel challenged, lady beetles release some of their blood. The yellow color and strong odor deter predators. If you allow your students to hold the lady beetles, the organisms may release this yellow liquid as a sign of stress.

What are these yellow clusters on the underside of the leaves in the habitat?

Congratulations! You have eggs. Lady beetle eggs are either yellow or orange, and are secured on the underside of leaves. You will need to isolate the eggs from the adults, as the adults will eat the eggs (even their own). The larvae should hatch within a few days. Isolate the larvae, as they will eat one another.

Problems? We hope not, but if so contact us. We want you to have a good experience.

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