

What's in your garden?

Ladybirds or flying beetles are sometimes known as 'insect alligators' because of their voracious taste for garden pests including greenfly (aphids) and scale insects so should be the friend of farmer and gardener alike. You might also hear them referred to as 'ladybugs' and 'ladybeetles'. Generally found between March and October there are over 46 species of ladybird the most common of which is the seven spot recognisable by it's bright red outer shell which protects the delicate wings beneath. The colour also wards off potential predators along with a sticky yellow excretion known as 'reflex blood' which you'll notice if you put one in the palm of your hand. Adult ladybirds lay eggs which hatch into grubs, becoming pupae and then emerging fully formed, during their lifetime they don't grow any further. Other varieties you might see include the two spot, orange ladybird and byrony.



Orange



7 spot



Bryony

Attracting ladybirds to your garden



If you thought about buying a bee hotel after reading 'What's in your garden' in the June edition last year then do think again because Langlands garden centre at Siptonthorpe are selling combined insect hotels providing homes for bees, ladybirds and other insects. Alternatively why not leave a small patch of dead plant stems for ladybirds, they particularly like fennel!

As for ladybird friendly plants why not add dill and coriander to your herb pots or try some marigold, tansy and fern leaf yarrow.

How can I get the children involved?

For younger children try www.ladybird-survey.org/children where you'll find a range of activities from designing your own ladybird and a fun quiz to the chance to send in details of ladybird sightings in your own garden. For regular wildlife updates why not join the nature detectives club? Tesco voucher holders can exchange just £5.50 worth of vouchers for a years membership where kids can get advice on looking for wildlife, download information and activity packs, play games and even go on hunts! Just go to www.naturedetectives.org.uk for more details