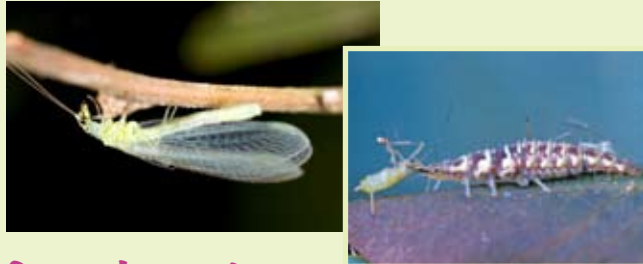


ASSESSING THE LINE-UP

Here are rap sheets and mug shots on ten beneficial bugs that consume large numbers of pests or pollinate plants. Do not attempt to apprehend them. . . just let them serve time in your garden!



Lacewing larva and aphid

Green Lacewing

Aliases: Aphid wolf, aphid lion.

Wanted For: Aggressively devouring aphids, thrips, mealybugs, scale, spider mites, leafhoppers and insect eggs.

Family History: Adult green lacewings feed on nectar, pollen, and honeydew – at dawn and dusk. Juveniles are voracious predators known to eat up to 20 or 30 aphids a day.

Sightings: Last seen around nectar-producing plants like sunflowers, tansy and buckwheat.



Soldier beetle larva

Soldier Beetle

Aliases: Leatherwings.

Wanted For: Attacking and feeding on aphids and other soft-bodied insects.

Family History: Adults feed on pollen and insect pests on plants. The larva (or “young”) hunt for pests in leaf litter and soil.

Sightings: Known to feed on the pollen of flowers like goldenrod and milkweed while waiting for its prey. Reports of sightings appear in early spring, shortly after aphids begin hatching.



Dragonfly nymph

Dragonfly

Aliases: Mosquito hawk, darter.

Wanted for: Preying on unsuspecting flying insects like mosquitoes, flies and midges.

Family History: The dragonfly’s excellent eyesight, strong jaws and agile flight make it a deadly predator able to catch prey in mid-air. Dragonfly larvae (nymphs) live in water and are also efficient hunters eating mosquito larvae and other insects, snails and even small fish.

Known Accomplices: Often seen in the company of its relative, the damselfly, another insect predator. Don’t be fooled: when at rest, dragonflies hold their wings outstretched while damselflies fold their wings closed over their bodies.

Sightings: Last seen near garden ponds, streams and other bodies of water.



Bumblebee nest cells cut open to show developmental stages

Bee

Aliases: European honeybee, bumblebee. (Also includes hundreds of native bee species including leafcutter and orchard bees.)

Wanted For: Pollinating the flowers of many of our ornamental, fruit and vegetable plants.

Family History: Specially equipped for moving large quantities of nectar and pollen, honeybees are usually found in colonies in hives. Most native bees are masters at eluding notice and often live alone in ground nests. Bee populations are diminishing due to pesticide use, and loss of habitat.

Sightings: Usually seen in gangs in the vicinity of flowers high in nectar and pollen including asters, sunflowers, mints, lavender, rosemary and sages.



Syrphus larva eating broccoli aphids

Syrphid Fly

Aliases: Hoverfly, flower fly.

Wanted For: Hunting down aphids, mealybugs and other pests, and for pollinating plants.

Family History: Adults are known to be important pollinators. The larvae suck the juices out of their victims. A single larva can consume hundreds of victims a month.

Sightings: Larvae are usually found under leaves in the company of aphids. Adults have been seen lurking around ceanothus, sunflowers, feverfew and other nectar-rich flowers.

Master of Disguise: With their yellow and black stripes the adults appear to be bees. They have only one set of wings and can’t sting. The larva look like fat, legless caterpillars.



Ground beetle larva

Ground Beetle

Aliases: Predacious ground beetle, and carabids, among others.

Wanted For: Conspiring to eat many soil-dwelling pests like slugs, snails, cutworms and root maggots.

Family History: Fast-moving predator, armed with strong jaws. Generally dark brown or black with long legs, and shiny, hard front wing covers that sometimes have a metallic sheen. Usually hunts at night. Reported to be able to consume its body weight in food each day. Larva also feed on soil insects.

Sightings: Usually sighted hiding in soil or under rocks, dried leaves and mulch.



Parasitoid wasp cocoons on caterpillar

Parasitic Wasp

Aliases: Trichogramma, Braconid, Hyposoter and Ichneumon, among others.

Wanted For: Parasitizing the eggs of cutworms, cabbage loopers, codling moths, tomato hornworms, aphids, whiteflies, scales and other pests.

Family History: These tiny, notorious wasps lay their eggs on or inside of pests or insect eggs and the larva eat the pest. Can be tracked by the tell-tale signs they leave behind, like tiny, white cocoons on caterpillars, or “aphid mummies,” – the tan, dried up husks of aphids stuck to a leaf.

Sightings: Suspected of foraging for nectar on tiny flowers like alyssum, yarrow, tansy, and clover.



Orb weaver spider
Juveniles closely resemble adults

Spider

Aliases: Funnel weavers, crab spiders, and golden orb spiders, among others.

Wanted For: Trapping and bugnapping a wide variety of insect pests.

Family History: The most deadly natural enemy of pests, spiders are skilled predators. They may hunt with webs or track their victims on the ground and on plants. Can be identified as arachnids, with eight legs and two body parts.

Sightings: All over your garden, and on front porches near lights.

Warning: Spiders are thought of as fearsome creepy crawlers but very few have a bite that is harmful. Always wear gloves when cleaning garages, debris, woodpiles, storage areas or piles of clutter.



Ladybug larva and pupa

Ladybeetle

Aliases: Ladybug, ladybird beetle, seven-spotted ladybeetle.

Wanted For: Gorging on soft-bodied insects like aphids, scale, thrips, mealybugs and spider mites.

Family History: Both adults and larva eat large numbers of pests. It is believed that one ladybug can devour 5,000 aphids in its lifetime. Most common suspect is red with black spots – but watch for many other species in a variety of colors, with or without spots.

Warning: Be on the lookout for a ladybug look-alike: the spotted cucumber beetle! This green beetle with black spots feeds on crops and foliage.

Sightings: Known to loiter on nectar-rich flowers like yarrow, clover and tansy.



Tachinid fly eggs on a caterpillar

Tachinid Fly

Aliases: Diptera.

Wanted For: Attacking unsuspecting caterpillars and beetles.

Family History: Disguised as a hairy housefly, this parasitic insect lays its eggs on caterpillars, grubs and other insects. When the eggs hatch, the young (larva) tunnel into their victims and eat them.

Sightings: Often seen stealing the nectar and pollen of tansy, milkweed and Queen Anne’s Lace.