

## **Garden Friends: Lady Birds – 25 January 1994**

Lady Birds are friends of the garden. They are small brightly coloured, rounded beetles. The most common to be seen in the garden are the red two spotted ones and the orange eleven spotted ones. There is a Steelblue lady bird which is common to citrus trees, where it feeds on aphids and also scale. Lady birds love aphids which are our foe subject for today.

Lady birds overwinter as adults in clumps in sheltered areas, in posts in wooden fences and in garden sheds. Sometimes you'll find them under rocks. The adults emerge around Spring and start feeding on the aphid population which is beginning to chew on the young shoots on garden plants. I mentioned before how the aphids were attacking the new shoots on my Mandevilla vine. I have also seen lady birds clean up the aphids which had congregated on a rose bud. It is quite frustrating to see the buds on your plants being devoured by pests after you've watered and cared for them and just when you're looking forward to reaping the benefits, they end up being chewed and destroyed in front of your very eyes.

If undisturbed by chemical sprays, lady birds can be very useful in controlling aphids and scale populations in the summer months. However, during Spring and Autumn when aphids are producing at a great rate, that is when we have to act ourselves. I have said before that we can be the best predator if all. Examine your garden plants when you water the garden or walk around and wear pair of garden gloves and catch the offending grubs and insects and dispose of them with a gentle squeeze or pop them into a jar of kerosene. If we can manage to do without spraying every offending insect or grub, we would help the environment and encourage the predators back into the garden.