

Garden Friend: Lacewings, Neuroptera Order – 22 February 1994

Lacewings have fine transparent lace like wings, hence the name. The larvae of lacewings are also useful in the garden as both the insect and larvae prey on scale, aphids, mites, white fly and thrips, also moth and butterfly eggs laid on the brassicas, which include cabbages, brussel sprouts, cauliflower and broccoli. There are about 400 species of lacewings in Australia. Some lay their eggs on the end of a fine, thread like stalk of silk, which is attached to leaf or branch. The eggs hatch after a couple of weeks and the larvae lives in the garden and grow to maturity by feeding on the pests that I mentioned before. The larvae are mostly terrestrial or arboreal in nature. Much of the order of insect life are voracious, wandering predators, that stalk their prey. However, I read where one type of larvae, the ant-lion lace wing larvae belonging to the same Neuroptera order, bearing a resemblance to dragon flies when mature, make pit-like snares in soft soil, in which to trap their prey. You may have noticed small circular pits which taper to a point in soft soil. I used to wonder what made these unusual holes and one day someone explained it to me.

They are peculiar little creatures which are unique in the manner of trapping ants or other unsuspecting insects which fell into the hole and so ended up being a meal for the Ant Lion larva lurking at the bottom.

Lacewings are active throughout the year, so are quite useful in the garden. Although not many in number.

Cherish your garden friends as they help to control the garden pests naturally.

Lacewings and their larvae clean up aphids, scale, and many other pests which even the lovely new shoots on your garden plants, whether vegetables, ornamentals or shrubs.