

Recognizing friend from foe in your garden



Carla Keast

AROUND THE YARD

The foes are sometimes easy to recognize — they're the ones swallowing down the rest of your lily leaves oblivious to your watchful, appalled eye. The friends will be just as oblivious to you, because they're busy sneaking up on the aphids. It's really up to you to figure out who is who.

Lady bugs are an easy start. Familiar, friendly, and a formidable ally. They feed on mealy bugs, spider mites, various larvae, and aphids. An adult ladybug can eat an estimated 50 aphids a day; the larvae an estimated 25. Aphids reproduce

at an astronomical rate, but the lady bug is no reproductive slouch. It produces 200 to 1,000 offspring in each laying. Who stands the greatest chance of keeping up? A few hungry ladybugs or one lone gardener?

Lacewings are another easy to recognize group. They're a suspicious looking bunch, with their leaf-green colour and almost translucent wings — you just know they're up to no-good. And they are. The adults lay their eggs in aphid infested areas so their larvae which feed on them, have a ready source of food. They also like thrips, mites, leaf hoppers and caterpillars. For the gardener, lacewings are all good.

Parasitic wasps have elongated bodies and narrow waists and can look somewhat like yellow jackets or an odd-shaped fly. They are, however, truly wicked. Parasitic wasps lay their eggs into the

bodies of live spruce budworms, tent caterpillars, and other larvae, so their young have a ready supply of food.

Hover flies look somewhat like a house fly with either dark or striped yellow colouring. Rather than fly like an insect possessed, they hover. The larvae, which are green or pink, look more like slime than anything. Let it be, it too eats aphids. The adult hover fly is a terrific pollinator.

Bees are of course the pollinating champions. Most fruits and some vegetables require pollination in order to develop. For many reasons, bee populations are dramatically dropping, so enjoy any bees that visit your garden.

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Submitted photo

Busy bees should be recognized as welcome guests in your garden.