



## Different names

The scientific name given to this popular insect is *Coccinella septempunctata*. The word coccinella means scarlet; septempunctata means seven spots.

Many names given to this insect across Europe are connected to domesticated animals, and religion, especially the Virgin Mary.

In the UK, it is called ladybird or ladybug. Since it is not a bug, it is preferred by the name ladybird or ladybird beetle.

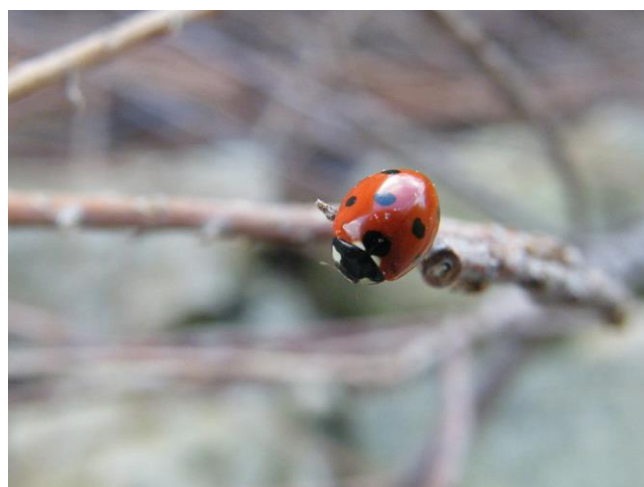
The Swedish name is *nyckelpiga* (key helper) and is associated with the Virgin Mary as well.

In Spain they are called *mariquita*, and *marieta* in the Catalan language, coming also from Virgin Mary (Maria).

In Malta, they are known as nannakola. Originally they were called kola, but when the nursery rhyme Nanna Kola (Grandmother Kola) came into being at the beginning of the 20th century, everybody started calling them nannakola.

*Nanna Kola mur l-iskola  
Aqbad sigġu, ibda oghla.*

Grandmother ladybird, go to school  
Grab a chair and start jumping.



## Funders and partner organisations

Green Recovery Challenge Fund



The National Lottery Heritage Fund



## Myths and legends



These beetles' names originated in the Middle Ages, when the beetle was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. European Christian societies believed the beetle's spots represented the Seven Sorrows of Mary.

In Malta, it is said that at the crucifixion scene, the Virgin Mary was holding a rose under the cross, and she pricked her finger. A black insect zoomed under her finger and caught the drop of blood full on her body, then flew under Mary's face and caught some of her tears. And so was born the ladybird, red for the blood except some spots where the tears washed the blood away.

Another story from the UK says that after farmers prayed to the Virgin Mary to protect their crops, ladybugs appeared to defend the crops. The farmers called the bugs "Beetles of Our Lady," which evolved into "ladybugs" hence a reference to the Virgin Mary (Our Lady).

The Swedish name nyckelpiga (key helper) is also associated with the Virgin Mary. According to tradition this insect had the keys to the kingdom of heaven, since seven is a sacred number with, for example, the seven virtues. The ladybug was the Virgin Mary's helper who looked after the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

## Traditions

In Sweden, it used to be said that you are let in through the gates of heaven if you let a captured ladybug fly away. Ladybirds were also said to have the power to reveal the future. If a ladybird lands on your hand and crawls along your fingers, it will measure new gloves for you. This means that you are either going to a wedding or a funeral.

In central Europe there is a saying 'Ladybug, where do you take me to get married?' because it was said that people could find their love by going into the direction in which the ladybird flew.

Many cultures consider ladybirds lucky and have nursery rhymes or local names for the insects that reflect this. For instance, the Turkish name for the insect is uğur böceği, literally meaning 'good luck bug'. In many countries, particularly across Europe, including Russia, Turkey, and Italy, the sight of a coccinellid is either a call to make a wish or a sign that a wish will soon be granted.

In France, ladybirds were used to predict when women will marry. This could be done by placing the insect on a finger and counting the years aloud until the beetle flies away.



## Traditional medicine

Ladybirds have in the past been used in folk medicine for toothache. Most sources state that they were crushed and rubbed around the evil tooth. Other sources say that they collected the yellow liquid that many ladybugs secrete in the knee crease when they become stressed and applied this liquid to the aching area. The ladybird method against toothache is said to have existed until the beginning of the 20th century.

A tincture of crushed ladybugs could remove migraines and nerve tension if rubbed into the face.

It is also possible to read in some 19th century textbooks that ladybird preparations can cure rabies and kidney disease. In folk medicine ladybird beetles have also been prescribed as remedies for colic and measles.

## Importance of ladybirds

Clusters of ladybird beetles are often gathered and sold to farmers and gardeners to control insect pests such as aphids, scales, and mites. Thus, they play an important role in protecting crop and non-crop plants.

The Australian ladybird beetle, or vedalia beetle, was brought to western North America to help combat an outbreak of cottony-cushion scale, which threatened to ruin citrus orchards.

Ladybirds are great for connecting people with nature! They are people friendly and with their slow way, can wander from a leaf onto a finger allowing children to take a good look and observe.

## Attracting ladybirds to your garden

### 1. Don't eradicate all the pests in the garden

A few here and there won't do your plants any harm. Resist the urge to kill aphids as soon as you spot them on your plants. If you must use any kind of chemical control, opt for oils, which do less damage to lady beetles.

### 2. Grow the right plants

Besides pests, ladybirds also feed on nectar and pollen. They prefer small flowers, flat open petals, and umbellifers (umbrella- or disc-shaped flowers) that they can land on and crawl over easily. Many of the same flowers you'd grow for bees and butterflies are the ones ladybugs love too.

### 3. Provide a safe habitat

You can entice ladybirds to stay in the area by providing a safe location for them to overwinter. An example of this is a bug hotel, set up in a south-facing area for the best warmth

