

Harlequin ladybird

Harmonia axyridis

Invasive: High impact

Species profile

- Habitat:** Terrestrial.
- Distribution in Ireland:** Localised distribution with most records from Cork City where it is established. Also established in Co. Carlow. Few other casual occurrences in other locations.
- Status:** Established.
- Family name:** Coccinellidae.
- Reproduction:** After eggs are laid, there are 5 larval stages then a pupa stage followed by the adult stage. Produces 20-50 eggs per day and up to 1000-4000 in their lifetime. Can produce 4 generations per year in favourable conditions. Species is generally bivoltine (2 generations per year).

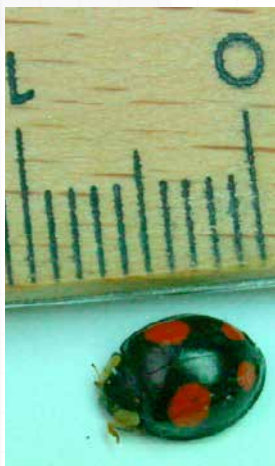
Identifying features

- Colour:** Has a very variable elytral (wing case) ground colour (yellow, orange, red or black). Its legs are usually reddish to brown in colour.
- Spots:** These are usually black but can be reddish-brown and number from 0-22.
- Size:** Slightly larger and more domed shaped than most native species of ladybirds (6-8mm in length).
- W-M Shape:** The species often has a W or M shaped marking on the pronotum (back of the head).

The most commonly recorded looking forms of harlequin ladybird in Ireland and Britain are the form *succinea*; form *conspicua* and form *spectabilis*.



Harlequin Ladybird form *conspicua*
© V. Murphy



Melanotic harlequin ladybird with 4 red spots, form *spectabilis*
© C. O' Flynn



Harlequin ladybird showing a different colour and number of spots along with the M-W shape on the pronotum © Shutterstock

Harlequin ladybird showing characteristic M or W shape on the pronotum, form *succinea*
© Shutterstock



Harlequin ladybird

Invasive: High impact

Threats

It threatens the diversity of native ladybirds as both the adult and larvae will feed on other ladybird larvae if food is short; in particular the smaller 2-spot ladybird.

There is a possibility it could impact upon fruit production.

Could become a nuisance in buildings during the autumn and winter when it congregates indoors possibly in large numbers of hundreds and hibernates colonially on walls and behind curtains. When disturbed it exudes a caustic yellow liquid which is known to stain and damage furnishings.



Harlequin ladybird pupa - © J. O'Sullivan



Harlequin ladybird larva showing orange L-shape on each side, plus 4 orange spines towards the rear - P. Cotter

Similar species

Native ladybird species.

Due to their variable nature, harlequin ladybirds may be mistaken with other native ladybird species. In Ireland, mistaken harlequin ladybird reports are most commonly for the variable but much smaller 10-spot ladybird (*Adalia 10-punctata*), the much smaller 22-spot ladybird (*Psyllobora 22-punctata*) and the similar sized 2-spot ladybird (*Adalia 2-punctata*) (including its black with red spot form) and the eyed ladybird.



22 spot ladybird - © O. Duffy



Eyed ladybird
© R. Jones



Harlequin ladybirds can have a wide number of spots and various colours - © N. Davis

