



Harlequin Ladybirds at Swansea University – advice for staff and students



What are they?

Harlequin ladybirds are an invasive ladybird species, originally from Asia but introduced to America and Europe to control aphids on crops. They made it to the UK in 2004 and are now widespread throughout England and Wales.

How do I recognise them?

They are slightly larger than most of our common native ladybirds but incredibly variable in appearance, often red or orange with lots of black spots or black with two large red or orange spots, but see above for other variations.

What is the problem?

They are voracious predators, out-competing native ladybirds for food, and when they run out of aphids, turning on other insects including native ladybirds and their young. They are the main cause of the decline in some native ladybird species.

Why do I need to know?

Harlequin ladybirds often move into buildings in the autumn to hibernate in mass aggregations, emerging again in spring – sometimes into offices and lecture theatres.

What should I do if I come across them?

Don't worry, they are generally harmless to people (although like all ladybirds, while they aren't aggressive, they can bite). If you are able to collect them with a glass and piece of cardboard they can be released outdoors – they are so common that you won't be increasing the problem. If there are more than you can handle, put a request in to the cleaners via the estates helpdesk <https://quemis.swan.ac.uk/helpdesk/users/login.asp>.