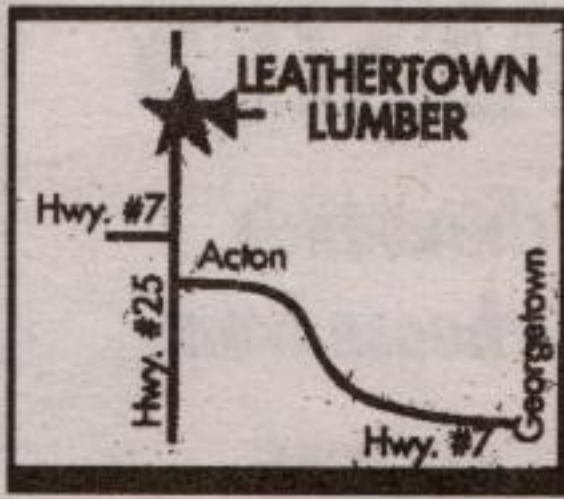


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Cute 'ladybugs' now a major pest

Everyone used to love them. A couple "ladybugs" in the house was nice, however, when the numbers reach a couple hundred or even a thousand their popularity soon wanes. Last year, lady beetles were definitely the "bug of the year".

While we have been seeing the multi-coloured Asian Lady Beetle for the past four or five years, the fall of 2002 was, by far, the heaviest outbreak of these insects. The major infestation that occurred late last summer was probably related to the outbreak of another imported insect—the Asian Soybean Aphid. This insect is a major pest of soybean crops and was first reported in Wisconsin in 2000.

Last summer they occurred in tremendous numbers, even showing up in downtown Toronto. These aphids caused large-scale damage to soybeans in Ontario; some crops suffering 25 per cent and more reductions in yield with some fields being plowed under without even being harvested. Since aphids are one of the prime food sources of lady beetles, their tremendous numbers probably contributed to the explosion of the lady beetle population.

Attempts to introduce this lady beetle were first made as far back as 1916 and have occurred numerous times since then. They have been introduced to control pests of various crops such as aphids on pecan trees in the southern United States. Many other species of lady beetles have been introduced by both the U.S. and Canadian Departments of Agriculture over the years but this species is the one that has caught our attention.

To dispel some myths, these beetles:

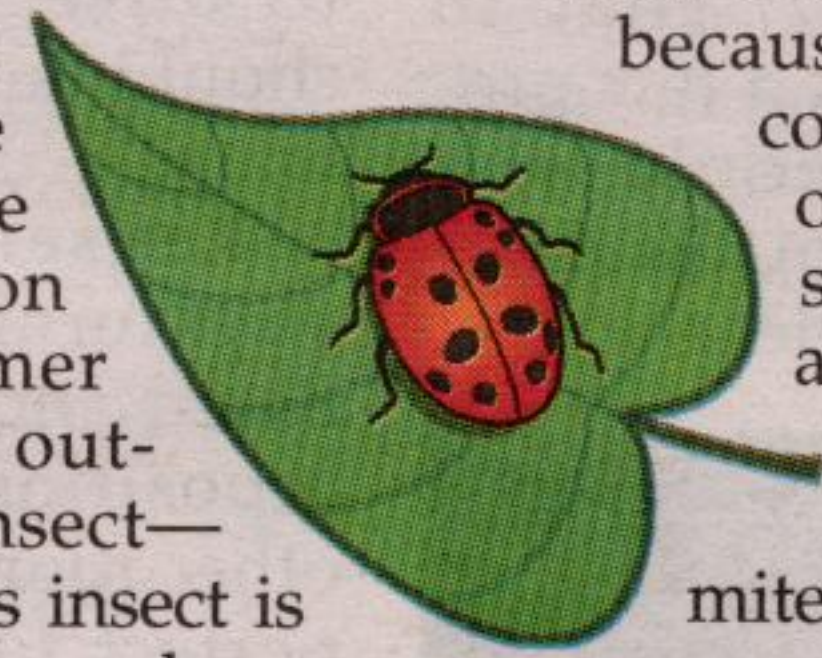
- were not brought in to control purple loosestrife
- are not different species depending on colour and number of spots
- do bite (without provocation)
- give off an odour and stain if crushed
- do overwinter
- do not feed or breed in the home

These beetles are called multicoloured because they come in a variety of colours from pale yellow to red or orange. The number of spots also varies from none to as many as 19. While both the larvae and adults feed primarily on small insects and mites etc. they were observed last summer feeding on fruits such as raspberries and apples. This was probably because there were not enough regular food sources to sustain the large beetle population.

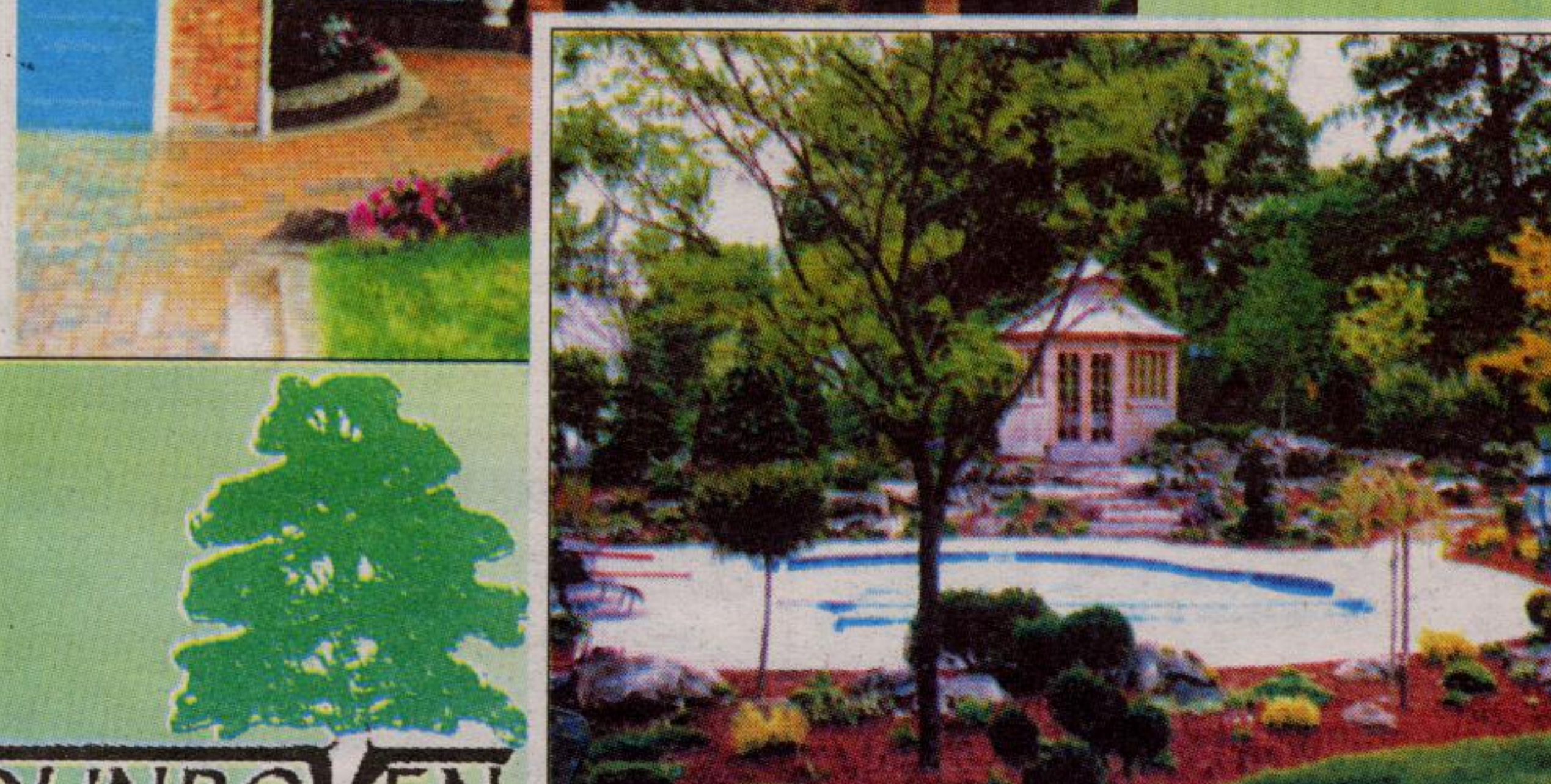
Vacuuming in the house is the best way to control them indoors. Seasonal treatments for other pests such as cluster flies and paper wasps will also help to reduce the number of lady beetles. Timing is critical as in the fall they do not start coming in until mid-October. Last fall they started on Thanksgiving weekend.

Lady beetles that entered last fall will now be coming out of dormancy and will be attempting to get back outside. This will continue until around late April. When they emerge inside the house, they are attracted to the windows by the light and will congregate there trying to get out. Factors such as aphid populations and weather will determine if they will be a major nuisance again this year.

—Article provided by Dr. Bug Urban Pest Control Ltd. of Georgetown



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