

Harlequin ladybirds fact sheet

Have you seen them? Sightings of this insect have been recorded in Waltham Forest.

This insect has a huge appetite for greenfly, leaving little for native ladybird that then starve. Worse still, the harlequin will turn on other ladybirds if their food resource diminishes. The invader will also prey on other types of insects, eating butterfly eggs, caterpillars and lacewing larvae.

The call is for all gardeners, wildlife enthusiasts and anyone with a love of ladybirds to examine trees, bushes and plants and record the harlequins they find.

There is a UK-wide survey to track this alien ladybird that threatens the existence of the native species. They are hoping not only to monitor the harlequin and its impact but also to use the whole study as a model for how to deal with invasive species. Originally from Asia, the harlequin was probably imported into the UK on plants that came in from continental Europe.

Dealing with harlequin ladybirds

Residents are asked to report any sightings of the harlequin ladybird, including where it was found (using a grid reference or postcode), the date and how many ladybirds there were. A photograph of the ladybird would also help verification of each find. It is critical to monitor this ladybird now, before it gets out of control and starts to annihilate our own British ladybirds. Scientists want gardeners and wildlife enthusiasts to report sightings of the pest to www.harlequin-survey.org.

