



MudPuppy's Pond

“Ladybug, ladybug, fly away home!”

Did you know that four ladybugs made a trip into space aboard the Space Shuttle in 1999?

Ladybugs' favorite food is aphids — tiny insects that drink the sap from plants. If your folks ever tried to raise rose-bushes, they were bound to have complained about finding aphids on them. One good way to get rid of aphids is to release ladybugs in your garden.

The ladybugs that traveled into space were part of an experiment to see if ladybugs could still capture aphids in a zero-gravity environment. Here on Earth, aphids try to escape from the ladybugs by hopping away from them; to successfully hop away, they would need gravity to help them. Observations made during the experiment led the scientists to conclude that ladybugs were just about as good at catching aphids in space as they are here on Earth.

Interesting Ladybug Facts

- Ladybugs may eat as many as fifty aphids a day during warm weather; a ladybug larvae may eat as many as twenty five aphids. (They also like mealybugs and mites.)
- There are over 5,000 species of ladybugs in the world.
- The females are larger than the males.
- Ladybugs can play dead when threatened! (Can you think of another creature that does that?)
- Ladybugs go into what is called “diapause” in the winter. This is a form of hibernation.

Back to the Space Shuttle Ladybugs: the astronauts named them. Can you guess what names they gave them? Here are two hints: Ladybugs are a type of beetle, and remember, there were four of them. (You may need some help from your grandparents for the answer!)

Color the Ladybug! Remember, they have black spots on a reddish-orange body. As a matter of fact, their red color fades to a lighter shade the older they get. And, types of Ladybugs are told apart by the number of spots they have on their backs!

