

Stethorus lady beetles (*Stethorus picipes*, *S. punctum*, *S. punctillum*)

Identification

The *Stethorus* lady beetle, also called “the spider mite destroyer”, is 1.5 mm long or smaller. It exhibits the standard lady beetle body shape but has a typical shiny black body with pale, tiny hairs.

The larvae are dark grey to brown and covered with a plentitude of fine hairs. The pupae are dark orange to black and covered with fine hairs.



Above Left: *Stethorus* Adult and Larva (<http://www.cafcs.wvu.edu/kearneysville/profile/erm.htm>)

Above Right: *Stethorus* development stages
(http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/NE/spider_mite_destroyer.html)

Preferred food

Stethorus lady beetle adults and larvae prey almost exclusively on spider mites. An adult may consume 20 to 60 spider mites and lay up to ten eggs per day over a three-month period. The older larvae can eat up to 250 mites per day.

Life cycle

Stethorus lady beetles overwinter as adults in leaf litter. The females will lay their eggs in the midst of a spider mite colony. Development from egg to adult takes two to four weeks, depending on temperature, resulting in two to three overlapping generations during the year.

Status in ornamental plants

This lady beetle species is very common on plants with a high population of spider mites. It provides relatively good control on mature plants in landscape areas but it usually appears too late in the season to prevent damage on young nursery plants.