

Praying Mantis



GARDEN EARTH
NATURALIST

ECO-SERVICE CARDS

PRAYING MANTIS

FAMILY: several

ORDER: Odonata

IDENTIFICATION CLUES



- ◆ 2 - 2 1/2 inches long
- ◆ triangular head and large compound eyes
- ◆ thin neck allows flexible movement of head 180 degrees
- ◆ long body, green or brown; well camouflaged
- ◆ large forelegs with sharp tips and spines for capturing prey



Where to Look:

Mantids are found in the foliage of shrubs and small trees and on flower heads during the day.

Who Eats It?

The main enemies of mantids are parasitic wasps; birds and some small vertebrates will also eat mantids.



LIFE CYCLE INCOMPLETE METAMORPHOSIS

Eggs are laid in a foamy froth which is attached to leaves or bark. The froth hardens forming a protective capsule. Nymphs emerge looking like tiny adults. They are carnivorous and will even eat each other.

What It Eats.

Mantids eat a large variety of insects including grasshoppers, caterpillars, moths, butterflies, flies, wasps and even each other.



Did You Know

The position praying mantids take while waiting for prey, with their forelegs folded against the thorax, looks as if they are praying. Mantids have an ear between the hind legs which helps them sense movement of prey through sound or vibration.

Role in the Ecosystem

As predators, mantids play an important role in controlling populations of insect pests like caterpillars.