Beneficial Insects

Damselflies

Common and Scientific Names:

- Scientific: Odonata: *Zygoptera*
- Common: Bog dancers, damsels, devil's darning needles & narrow wings

Description

Damselflies are delicate, weak-flying insects. Adult damselflies have long slender bodies in a variety of bright colors. Some species will change colors depending on their environment, in response to temperature or light.

Compared to dragonflies, damselflies are small and slim. At rest, most species fold their wings along their backs, though the spread-wings may be held out like a "V."

There are different types of damselflies:

- Broad-winged Damselflies: Wings attached broadly to thorax, body metallic-colored, wings often with dark areas or with red spot at base. Usually found near rivers or streams
- Pond Damselflies: Formerly known as narrow-winged damselflies. Wings narrowly attached to body, body various colors, often blue and black, wings clear. Found in all aquatic habitats
- Spread-wing Damselflies: Wings held at a 45 degree angle to body at rest, body may or may not be metallic-colored, but wings either clear or tinged with amber. Most prefer still waters, but some are found near rivers or streams

Life Cycle

Damselflies live for 2 months to 3 years as nymphs, undergoing five to 15 molts as they grow. Naiads, much like adults are fierce predators, preying on various small aquatic insects within their reach.

At the last stage, a naiad crawls out of the water, dries its skin, which splits open after warming in the sun

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– with the adult damselfly emerging. Once its new legs harden, the new adult is ready to hunt and immediately starts to devour small insects.

Adults return to areas near water to breed when they reach sexual maturity.

Habitat and Preferred Plants
Damselflies can be found in dark, green leafy, places – often around streams and ponds. They are integral to stream and pond ecosystems and their presence (or lack thereof) can be used to indicate whether water is clean or polluted.

How They Benefit the Environment
Damselflies are voracious predators. As adults they prey on and can consume large quantities of flies, mosquitoes and moths, with some even eating beetles and caterpillars.

The presence of damselflies can help to measure the quality of water and the surrounding environment. They are strongly affected by different factors such as water flow, pollution and vegetation.

What We Can Do to Support Them and Increase Their Numbers
Both destruction and/or the altering of freshwater habitats can threaten damselfly populations, as damselflies need clean water to breed.

Source:

- https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials/beneficial-12_damselflies.htm
- https://uwm.edu/field-station/chasing-damselfies/
- https://medina.osu.edu/sites/medina/files/imce/AGNR/Handouts/Dragonflies%20and%20Damselflies.pdf