



Bug of the week

The **green lacewing** (*Mallada basalis*) is an extremely useful component of the insect fauna. The green adult is 10-15mm long and has four wings that resemble delicate lace construction, that are held in a distinctive tent-like fashion. Adults have antennae that are a similar length to its body and a yellow-gold stripe that runs along the top of its back. Eyes are coppery-green in colour.



Adult green lacewing (image: Mike Bowie)

Adult females lay oval, pale green eggs that they attach to leaves with fine stalks to avoid predation. Larvae are pale brown to grey in colour and have a row of hair tufts along the sides of its body. The larvae are not that obvious as they attach bits of leaf debris on its back as camouflage, earning their nickname of 'trash carriers'. What usually gives the larvae away is that the small pile of leaf debris is moving. Usually under closer inspection the tusk-like mandibles (jaws) can be observed protruding from their leaf debris disguise.



Green lacewing larva with leaf debris intact (image: Tom Saunders) Green lacewing larva with camouflage removed (image: Mike Bowie)

The green lacewing is distributed in parts of New Zealand, Australia, Micronesia, Polynesia, Philippines, Taiwan, China and India. The larvae are useful predators of aphids, psyllids, mealybugs, thrips and mites. Both adults and larvae can be observed on vegetation at night, when adults are sometimes attracted to house lights.

