

# Praying Mantis

## Product Guide

Questions? Contact us at (888) 784-1722 or [helpdesk@groworganic.com](mailto:helpdesk@groworganic.com)

Praying Mantis Egg Cases are available from about December 1st to early June, depending on demand. Hatching period is in the spring months, as late as June in the northern United States and earlier, accordingly, in the warmer southern states. The warmer the weather, the shorter the hatching time. After hatching, the baby mantids (nymphs) emerge from the case and float to the ground. They resemble a large mosquito when young, and are very difficult to see as they blend easily with plant life. Through spring and summer mantids shed their skin many times. They vary in color (gray, green, pinkish) and usually darken with age. Their color is natural camouflage—it even fools other insects.

They have enormous appetites and never seem to get enough to eat. In their young stages, they eat aphids, flies, small caterpillars, and other soft-bodied insects. As they grow, they eat larger insects such as grasshoppers and beetles. With plenty to eat, these bugs (especially the female mantids) sometimes grow to the enormous size of 5" long. In size and appetite, they are giants compared to the smaller native mantids. The female usually eats the smaller males after mating. They do not eat vegetation—they are carnivorous.

The mantids are different from ladybugs in that they lay in wait for their prey and when it comes close enough, they snap it up with a lightning movement of their strong forelegs. Ladybugs are constantly on the prowl, searching for food. Mantids seldom eat ladybugs due to their bitter taste, so these beneficials generally do well together. However, when hungry enough, they will.

Mantids are poor at flying and walk slowly. If they have plenty to eat, they usually stay close to where they were born. With plenty to eat, the female sometimes lays eggs in the fall, thus creating the possibility of a new hatch for the following year. If she deems it necessary though, she may fly to a more suitable place to lay her eggs.

Mantids are very ferocious-looking creatures, but are harmless to humans. If handled properly, they do not bite. Do not pick them up behind their forelegs. The dark-colored fluid from their mouth is harmless. They can become tame enough to be pets and will sometimes eat raw meat and insects from your fingers. The mantis is the only known insect that can turn its head to look over its shoulder. Nature placed the strong forelegs in a position to remind one of praying; from this they derived their name.

### Instructions

**Note: Please be patient, sometimes it can take up to 8 weeks of warm weather for them to hatch.**

Attach or hang the egg case on a bush, hedge, limb or anything 2 or more feet above the ground. A needle with white thread may be run through the outer surface of the case—not too deep, to avoid damaging the eggs. You can then hang the case easily where desired. This hanging and/or swinging helps keep birds and other predators away from the case. Oiling the upper part of the string helps keep ants away. High air pollution may have adverse effects on hatching and survival.

