

MANTIDS IN MY GARDEN

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In a twenty minute spell of beating ornamental shrubs and herbs in our garden on 3 March 1990, *Miomantis caffra* outnumbered *Orthodera ministralis* 19 to one; the latter being a single adult specimen (sex not noted). *M. caffra* was present in all stages except 1st instar, and included two males, four females (one of whom attacked the point of the beating stick when disturbed!) and the rest nymphs.

Two of the nymphs were brown, and were well camouflaged amongst the foliage. The rest were a bright turquoise-green and were quite conspicuous against the dark green foliage. When sitting on the leaves of a purple barberry their camouflage didn't work at all!

One nymph sitting, or rather lying on a nikau palm frond, looked as if it had been pressed between the leaves, but stood up and moved without difficulty when it was nudged gently.

The only other insect which outnumbered *M. caffra* in this brief exercise of beating and searching was *Scolypopa australis*; its numbers were in the uncountable range, and the ant *Technomyrmex albipes* - all over the beating sheet when a certain scale-infested fuschia bush was tapped! The square-ended crab spider, *Sidymella* sp. was present in numbers roughly similar to *M. caffra*. Both of these predators readily take the passion vine hopper in captivity when offered, but they have not made a noticeable dent in the population outside.