

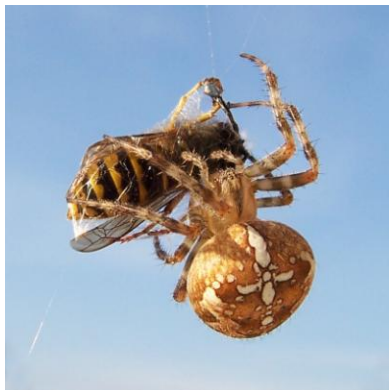
Garden spiders are good



Do spiders give you the creeps? You'll be happy to hear we have almost nothing to fear from them in the Pacific Northwest, and they're actually less dangerous than pesticides. You may notice certain spiders more in late summer, but they are working to eat the bugs that really bother, all year long.

Summer is a garden spiders' season of adulthood

Orb weaver "garden" spiders are more noticeable in late summer because they have been eating thousands of insects all season. Now they are big enough to be visible and to shoot their webbing longer distances. But not for long. As any kid who's read *Charlotte's Web* will tell you, after laying her eggs, the spider dies. So after fall, you won't notice the garden spiders much until next year.



Spiders eat pests

Spiders eat mosquitoes, yellow jackets, ants, flies, aphids and more. Thank goodness! In Great Britain, it has been estimated that spiders eat more than the total weight of the human population (circa 1941) in insects each year! Protect spiders and you'll have fewer bugs bugging you in the garden.

A garden spider eats a wasp.

Don't like to walk through webs?

Waving a stick in front of you as you walk will help keep spider webs out of your hair, but some spiders can rebuild their webs in less than an hour. For a more lasting effect, capture the spider in a container with a lid. Then relocate it to an area you won't often walk through.

In the house, you can leave spiders there to fight pests for you. If you feel you must remove them instead, use a vacuum or a glass and stiff piece of paper. Whatever you do, don't use pesticides indoors or out as they'll put you, your children, and your pets at risk. Pesticides don't work well anyway since few are formulated for spiders and those that are really only work if you spray them right on the spider, which is difficult.

Spiders are safer than pesticides

Many pesticides are linked to serious human and pet health problems such as cancer, asthma, neurological disorders and birth defects. Pesticides are also among the top ten causes of fatal accidental poisonings of children. Pesticide exposures are also more common than bites according to U.S. poison center data. Pesticides generated 21,000 more calls than bites (1.3 times as many) in 2009. Of the reported bites, only a tiny fraction were likely to have been from spiders.



Only two spiders in our region pose potential danger to humans: black widows and hobo spiders. But don't worry! Black widows are extremely rare, and according to local scientists, current evidence does not support the claims of harm from hobo spiders. In case you were wondering, brown recluse spiders do not live west of the Rockies. Regardless, if you want to be extra cautious, wear gloves and long sleeves when moving an old woodpile (especially in summer) or when cleaning out a crawl space.

Spiders are not built to bite animals as mosquitoes and wasps are. And because you are more than a million times larger than they are, they will run the other way if they can. The bottom line is that spiders are extremely unlikely to bite you, and if one of the very few that could, did, chances are you'd notice it less than a flea.

Looking for more information?

- For local spider identification, visit <http://web.pdx.edu/~smasta/MastaSpiders.html>.
- For spider myths and truths, visit www.burkemuseum.org/spidermyth.
- For more information on natural gardening, visit www.oregonmetro.gov/garden or call Metro at 503-234-3000.

This information is provided by Metro's natural gardening program.