

Common Spiders In and Around Homes

The Chisago County Master Gardeners just finished another very successful weekend at the Almelund Threshing Show. We had almost 400 gardeners and homeowners that came to our booth asking questions. Peggy Boike, one of our master gardeners, put together some excellent displays on tomato and apple problems as well as a spider display. It was from her spider display that I gathered information from Jeff Hahn on spiders for this article.

Spiders are a common and familiar group of arthropods. They are similar to insects in that they both have skeletons on the outside of their bodies and jointed legs. However, there are differences. Spiders have a cephalothorax and abdomen while insects have a head, thorax, and abdomen.

Insects have six legs and spiders have eight. Spiders usually have eight simple eyes while insects have two compound eyes. Spiders don't have any wings while insects can have four, two, or not any wings. Insects have two antennae while spiders don't have any. The mouth parts on spiders are chelicerae (fangs) and insects have mandibles (jaws).

Any arthropods that share the same characteristics as spiders are known as arachnids. Other arachnids include ticks, daddy-long legs, scorpions, and mites.

Another difference between spiders and insects is that all spiders can produce silk throughout their lifetime. However, just a few insects can produce silk, and then at only certain times during their life. Spiders use silk to build webs and other types of snares. Silk is also produced by spiderlings (young spiders) during a process called ballooning in which they shoot silk into the air and are carried away by the wind.

Spiders are predators that feed mainly on insects. All spiders have venom, but most are harmless to people. They are not aggressive and few bite, even if coaxed.

Spiders are divided into two groups depending on how they capture their prey. Hunting spiders rely on their quickness and relatively good eyesight to capture prey. There are several different hunting spiders. The jumping spider is common both indoors and outdoors. They are active during the day and are often found around windows, ceilings, walls, and other areas exposed to sunlight.

Wolf spiders are common to the outdoors and occasionally found indoors. They are found on the ground or under stones in a wide variety of habitats such as forest floors, grassy meadows, swamps, and bogs.

Fishing spiders are also known as dock spiders. They are typically seen around ponds, swamps, slow moving streams, and nearby vegetation. Fishing spiders can skate across water and can dive underneath to catch prey. They eat insects and also catch tadpoles, small fish, and other vertebrate animals.

Sac spiders are also known as two-clawed hunting spiders. Outdoors, they usually roll up leaves into a tube or may construct a retreat under stones. Inside buildings, sac spiders are found on walls or ceilings. Crab spiders are usually outdoors that are found on flowers and stems and leaves.

Web-building spiders live in or near their web and wait for the food to come to them. They include the comb-footed spiders that build their web near wood or stone piles and in quiet places like basements.

The orb or barn spiders are found near buildings, but usually not found indoors. Another orb spider is the large black and yellow garden spider, often found in the raspberry patch.

The grass spiders make their webs on the ground, around steps, window wells, foundations, and low shrubs.

For outdoor control of spiders it is necessary to reduce the number of spiders by good sanitation and preventing them from entering from the outside. If insecticides are necessary, spray where they hide. Use chlorpyrifos as a liquid concentrate or a liquid ready to-use product, always read the label before using any chemical.

For indoor control, sanitation is also very important. If you supplement with an insecticide, treat behind baseboards, in cracks and crevices, and other places where spiders hide. General treatment on surfaces and fogs are not effective. Most insecticides labeled for ants and cockroaches are also labeled for spiders. These products are commonly found in aerosol ready-to-use cans.

PLANT CLINICS: Volunteer Master Gardeners will be available Mondays (except Labor Day) from 4:30-7 at the Extension Office in North Branch at 38780 Eight Ave. to answer your gardening questions. You can also call 651-674-4417 during these hours to speak with a Master Gardener. Samples can be dropped off during the day on Monday if you cannot stop in during clinic hours. *Please note MONDAY is the only day you can drop off samples, as there is no longer staff at the North Branch Office who can answer gardening questions.*

VOICE MAIL: You can leave a question for a volunteer Master Gardener at 651-674-4417. Depending on the volume of calls, they try to respond within a couple of days. During office hours ask for the Master Gardener voicemail, after hours, select ext. 18. You can also get your question answered on the web at: www.extension.umn.edu/askmg

Submitted by Jerry Vitalis
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