Spiders are part of our every day world. Most buildings have a resident spider population feeding on household insects, stray flies and each other. They live in attics, basements or crawl spaces; behind and under furniture; bookcases or appliances; and in cracks between boards. Corners and baseboards are favorite locations.

The majority of house spiders are seldom or never seen. Some of the larger species mature and become more active from late August to early October. At that time, the house may appear to have been invaded. Outdoor spiders do sometimes blow or crawl in through open windows, etc., but most either die of thirst in the house or fall prey to resident species.

Depending on your outlook, spiders in the house can be an advantage or disadvantage. A few spiders are rarely noticeable and help control other insects that find their way into the house. Spiders do, however, produce sheets or strands (cobwebs) of silk webbing and small, white specks of excrement, which may drop on underlying items. People with allergies to spider venom, a fear of insects or severe health problems want to minimize the chance of encounters with spiders.

FEAR OF SPIDERS
It is surprising how many people have a fear of spiders. Horror movies, other people and just plain misinformation about spiders often are causes for this fear. Also, some spiders move quickly, giving the impression they are "after" us. Others hang around at eye level, where we blunder into their webs. People may consider spiders to be ugly and frightening, but many are quite handsome or graceful and all of them are fascinating.

Whatever the cause for fear of spiders, the fear is real. With some thought, effort and accurate knowledge about spiders, it may be possible to reduce the fear.

BASICS
Spiders are predators of insects and other creatures. Usually they only capture prey smaller than or equal to their own size. Humans are far too big, even for the most ambitious spider. Many spiders are small and have small mouth parts. These spiders are not capable of biting through human skin.

Spiders that can bite through human skin only do so when provoked. Often bites occur when the spider is pinched or trapped in clothing. Their bite is merely a defense reaction. For example, when cleaning the garage, you may stick your fingers in the spider's area or trap it. Wearing gloves would prevent bites.

Spiders can be ignored if their numbers are small and they stay in out-of-the-way places. They eat insects already in homes, such as cupboard pests, silverfish, sowbugs, or clothes moths. Sometimes they eat each other or capture stray insect invaders such as root weevils and blowflies. Spiders that are more visible--like the ones that get trapped in the tub or run up a wall--can be captured and released outside, vacuumed up, swatted flat or sprayed with an insecticide. (Do not overspray.)
Usually spider activity declines by mid-October. Unless you are continually introducing new spiders on firewood, your household spiders will retire into obscurity for another year, quietly killing many household insects.

"POISONOUS" SPIDERS
Because spiders inject a small amount of venom into their prey, they are all "poisonous." A few spiders are known to be dangerously venomous to humans. Most other spiders, if they can penetrate the skin, produce only a mild reaction varying from none to that of a mosquito bite or wasp sting, unless the individual has an allergy to that particular venom. Consult a physician if pain or discomfort follows a spider bite.

The only dangerously venomous spider known to occur in Washington is the western black widow, *Latrodectus hesperus*. It is not native to the Puget Sound region, though common in Eastern Washington. Specimens are sometimes introduced here, but apparently cannot establish a permanent population in our climate. Widows are shy, retiring spiders and bite reluctantly, usually only when molested. A common local house species is often mistaken for a black widow, but it has no red mark.

The feared brown recluse spider, *Loxosceles reclusa*, is not known to be established anywhere west of the Rockies. Occasional news reports of bites by brown recluse spiders have never been verified with an actual spider specimen.

*Tegenaria agrestis*, the aggressive house spider, is frequently found in crawl spaces, basements and garages in Western Washington. This fairly large funnel weaver species spends most of its time hanging around dark corners or running rapidly along floors and walls. It bites with little provocation when cornered or threatened and can cause a severe reaction in persons allergic to the venom. The allergic reaction is very similar to that of the brown recluse.

SPIDER MANAGEMENT
You can decide how you wish to deal with spiders. Fortunately, there will always be spiders; it is unrealistic to expect that they can be totally eliminated. If you feel you can't live with spiders, the best solution is to manipulate the environment so the spiders don't live where you do. The following approaches can reduce their numbers.

1. Habitat Modification. Those spiders which are capable of moving indoors from the outdoors are ones which establish their webs in wood piles, junk piles, disused yard furniture or tarps, trash bins, outdoor stairwells, window frames, porch structures, brick piles or ventilation structures. Eliminate or keep these sites clean.

2. Structural Modification. Prevent spider entry by keeping doors and windows screened, by weatherstripping doors so there are no openings between the bottom of the door and the doorsill; closing gaps around water pipes under sinks; and sealing cracks and openings in the house.

3. Sanitation Inside. Stored boxes, piles of magazines, and other items in basements create ideal hiding places for spiders. Many line out their lives and die without ever being noticed. The old practice of spring and fall cleaning is a practical control measure. Vacuum behind and under furniture and book cases, along baseboards and corners, and in storage areas.

4. Pesticides (Inside). An aerosol bomb or fogger will reduce spiders, as well as fleas and other insects that are already present. It will not provide residual control for insects coming in later. The pesticide also may not penetrate unaccessible areas. Be sure to follow label directions.

5. Pesticides (Outside). Diazinon, bendiocarb, chlorpyrifos or malathion can be applied around the outside of doors, windows, vents, outdoor stair-wells or window wells, foundations, or cracks and openings. Spray only where needed. Be sure that the site, (indoor use, along foundations outside, etc.)
is listed on the label. The product should also be labeled for spiders or nuisance pests.

6. Exterminators. Professional pest control operators (PCO's) or exterminators will tackle the job for you. Most rely solely on pesticides. There are many approaches used by various companies.

7.

8. Firewood. This deserves a special mention. Spiders seek warmth and shelter in protected places like logs, under piles of rocks, bark and other debris. The wood pile is a choice winter residence. Many spiders ride inside on the firewood. Protect outside wood piles with some sort of covering. The more debris that falls on the wood, the more attractive the spiders find it. It isn't advisable to spray the wood pile. Pesticides with enough residual to keep spiders out could be toxic to handle, and there is no information available on possible health effects of burning wood treated with pesticides.

9. New Construction. If you are adding a room, building a house, or remodeling, consider treating the wall voids with relatively non-toxic (to humans) boric acid or silica aerogel. These materials are picked up on the insect's body and eaten when the insect grooms itself.

Remember: Successful pest management usually requires a combination of methods. Each situation may require a different blend of management strategies.

**IDENTIFYING SPIDERS**

The most reliable way to distinguish major spider groups is by arrangement of the eyes on the "head" region of the spider. On the large spiders, this eye arrangement is readily visible. A hand lens or magnifier may make the job easier in some cases.

1. Eyes in 3 rows, arranged in 4, 2, 2, pattern.
   a. A wolf spider.
   ![Wolf Spider](image1)
   b. Jumping spiders.
   ![Jumping Spider](image2)

   ![Spider](image3)

   ![Brown Recluse](image4)

For more information on spiders, see EB 1548.

Spiders will also be identified by Mr. Rod Crawford at the Burke Museum on the University of Washington campus. Contact Mr. Crawford at 543-9853 (best in late afternoon and evenings until 10:00 pm).

Mr. Crawford has volunteered his considerable talent to help identify spiders. He does require careful information about the location and date of the collected spider.

Crab Spider
![Crab Spider](image5)
Funnel Weaver

Jumping Spider

Black Widow

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