KPOV – *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good at It

“Spiders”

August 17, 2021

As a gardener, I often see spider webs in the garden, the greenhouse, the storage shed and the garage. Sometimes you see the spider scurry away, and other times you can’t see the spider at all. Have you ever wondered which ones you should be worried about? Well I did. So I volunteered to research this story.

The Oregon State University Extension website contains a listing of the common spiders found in Oregon. You can see a photo of each spider, and click on the link to find more information. If you desire even more info., you can search the web with the spider name and the suffix “.edu”, which will bring up research based papers from other universities.

The really great news is that the dreaded Brown Recluse Spider is not native to Oregon, so you don’t have to worry about any necrotic venom bites from them.

I was also relieved to read that the second most worrisome spider from my childhood: The ‘Black Widow Spider’, is **not** a serious medical threat to humans. More about the Black Widow later.

Spiders are beneficial predators and serve a significant role in keeping populations of many insect pests in check. Spiders are oftentimes the most important biological control of pests in and around homes, gardens and crops. Unfortunately, they also prey upon some beneficial insects such as bees and butterflies. Most spiders remain outside, constructing their webs in foliage, cracks and crevices of rock walls or firewood, corners of outbuildings and other less trafficked areas, often near doors and access points where insects will enter. Yes, spiders do come inside the home too. Especially in the fall, seeking shelter when outside temperatures begin to drop.

What to do if you find a spider in the house? Insecticides are of little use, unless you spray the spider directly. You can capture the spider (if you can catch it) by placing a jar over it, then slide a paper under and take the spider outside. Spiders are often found in the sink or shower, where they come for moisture, and become trapped because of the slick surface.

If you are bitten by a spider, what should you do? First, look at the web style, and try to capture the spider alive so it can be identified by an expert at a later time, if necessary. (A smashed spider is extremely difficult to identify.) If the spider can be identified as a Black Widow, seek medical attention immediately.

Black widows are shy, and prefer to hide in irrigation boxes, or clutter near the doors and vents. The web is rather tangled, and the silk is very strong. Most bites are from the adult females, which are black with a distinctive red hourglass-type symbol on the underside of the abdomen.

There are three funnel web spiders commonly found here, both indoors and outdoors.

1. The Aggressive House spider, also known as a Hobo spider

2. The Giant House spider

3. Barn Funnel Weaver

All three are fast runners, and their webs share common traits; are flat, and sheet-like, often with a funnel or tunnel attached. These domestic funnel weave spiders cause no serious medical complications for humans if bitten. Don’t confuse them with the Australian hobo spider which is known for having more toxic venom.

There are 9 other spiders shown and described in the OSU Extension pamphlet ‘Common Spiders Found in Central Oregon’.

For more information on this or any other gardening topic, go to our website gocomga.com and click on the KPOV tab on the orange bar. This has been Gardening: Get Good at it on KPOV, The Point.

Resources:

Oregon State University publication: “Common Spiders Found in Central Oregon”. https://extension.oregonstate.edu/

University of California publication: “Widow Spiders and Their Relatives”.