KPOV – *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good at It

“Spiders”

January 8, 2019

Spiders! Some people just don’t like them, some even have a phobia about them. The truth is that they help us by eating the insects that damage our crops, invade our homes, and are vectors for disease. Out of the 500 or so species of spiders in Oregon the Black Widow is the only one that is poisonous. False information about the Hobo spider led many to believe that it was also poisonous but it is not. The Brown Recluse is poisonous but is not found in Oregon. Almost all spiders do contain one form or another of a neurotoxin that is lethal to small insects but harmless to humans. Spiders are shy, non-aggressive and don’t have any desire to bite anything that they can’t eat. But if you surprise or annoy them they might bite back. It’s possible that there will be pain, redness, and itching.

So why do you want to keep spiders around? A spider eats about 2000 insects a year. That should be reason enough to learn to like or at least tolerate spiders in your yard.

In Central Oregon the spiders you are most likely to encounter are the House spider, Barn Funnel Weaver, Trapdoor, Wolf, Garden, Crab, Jumping, Grass, False Black Widow, Hololena, Hackledmesh Weaver, Cat-Faced, and the only poisonous spider the Black Widow.

The funnel web weavers like the Grass Spider spin a dense, non-sticky, sheet-like web with a funnel-like retreat where the spider hides. The speedy Grass spider pounces on its prey and eats it at its leisure. Their webs can usually be found on grass, in low shrubs, in crevices, or along the bottoms of fences.

The Garden spider often builds its orb-shaped web between plants in the garden, in tall grasses, and between shrubs. However it is opportunistic and will use whatever framework it can find. It sits in the center of the spiral web facing downward and when prey becomes entangled in the web they inject it with venom to liquefy it and wrap it in silk.

The Trapdoor spider digs a burrow in the ground, usually on hillsides or cliff-faces, often facing direct sunlight for ambient warmth and usually near vegetation that is likely to attract insects. The top of the burrow is covered with a silk door that is hinged. They wait under the door until they sense oncoming prey then they quickly lunge out of the burrow and catch the prey item.

The Crab Spider is among the group that uses stealth and ambushes its prey. They wait in or on flowers, tree bark, or leaves for insects to wander by. Fast and agile they can capture a fly and inject it with venom to paralyze it.

The Wolf and Jumping Spiders are among the hunters. They don’t spin webs but actively hunt for prey. Wolf Spiders are often found in areas of tall shrubs or dense grasses where insects are abundant. When not actively searching for food, they may be found hiding under rocks or other objects. Jumping Spiders can leap many times their body length allowing them to ambush insects that they have stalked. It also provides an unexpected escape from possible predators. They can be found in almost any habitat, including homes, offices, and cars.

The webs created by House Spiders are classic Halloween webs: tangled messes in all corners of the attic or windows. This type of web is called a cobweb. When an insect becomes entangled they fling strings of silk at it. The victim is then bitten, injected with venom and eaten at a later time.

The Black Widow spins a web that is irregular in shape, but strong. They are built under stones, near openings of rodent holes, and on outbuildings such as sheds, outhouses or barns. They are unlikely to leave their webs and do not go out of their way to bite humans. However the venom of an adult female is highly poisonous and requires medical attention.

To lessen your interaction with spiders you can do the following:

* Wear gloves, pants, and long sleeved shirt when handling firewood or stored boxes where they may be residing.
* Seal holes around doors, windows and outlets for plumbing and wiring where they can find entry into the house.
* Sweep webs from corners, rock walls and under eaves. Repeat as necessary.
* Keep porch lights switched off as much as possible to keep from attracting flying insects that make good prey for spiders.
* Place sticky traps along baseboards and bed frames.
* Keep vegetation near your house mowed and trimmed.

For more information about this and other gardening topics log on to gocomga.com and click on KPOV Radio. This has been Gardening Get Good At It on the Point, KPOV High Desert Community Radio.

Resources:

http://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/2015/09/spiders-earn-their-keep-natural-pest-control-garden

http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials/beneficial-23\_spiny\_orb\_weaver\_spider.htm

http://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/insects/spiders-in-the-home-5-512/

http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/resources/wolfspider.shtml

https://blogs.cornell.edu/spiders/important-features-of-spider-biology/

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/06/0623\_040623\_spiderfacts\_2.html

http://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/common-spiders-found-central-oregon-0

http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/IPPM/OregonSpidersFactAndFiction.pdf

http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/IPPM/Pages/OregonSpiders.aspx

http://www.insectidentification.org/insect-description.asp?identification=Grass-Spider

http://www.insectidentification.org/insect-description.asp?identification=Crab-Spider-Mecaphesa

http://www.insectidentification.org/insect-description.asp?identification=Carolina-Wolf-Spider

http://www.insectidentification.org/insect-description.asp?identification=California-Trapdoor-Spider

http://www.insectidentification.org/insect-description.asp?identification=Bold-Jumping-Spider

http://www.insectidentification.org/insect-description.asp?identification=Southern-Black-Widow

http://www.insectidentification.org/insect-description.asp?identification=Banded-Garden-Spider

http://www.insectidentification.org/insect-description.asp?identification=American-House-Spider

http://www.spiders.us/species/filter/oregon/