

AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE



SPIDERS

OF



WASHINGTON STATE



With
illustrations,
photographs,
identification
tips & much
more

USASPIDERS.COM

MIKE MERANO

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Facts about spiders

-  Spiders come in various sizes, from the 0.3 mm long Samoan Moss Spider to the gigantic Goliath Birdeater, a tarantula with a leg span of up to one foot. Washington's largest spiders, the giant house spider can reach a leg span of up to almost 2 inches (50 mm).
-  The spider with the largest ever recorded leg span of almost 16 inches was a giant huntsman found in Australia.
-  Spiders feed almost exclusively on insects — both small and large. Almost exclusively! In 2019, a black and yellow garden spider ([Argiope aurantia](#)) caught and ate a decent-sized bat in Texas. Well, as they say: “Everything is bigger in Texas.” Argiope orb weavers are a very common sight in Washington backyards during summer and autumn, but they are harmless to humans or pets.
-  Combined, all spiders in the world consume around 800 million tons of prey per year, 90% of which are insects. In comparison, all whales on earth consume only around 450 million tons of biomass per year.
-  Therefore, spiders play an important role in keeping the balance in our natural ecosystem. The spiders in your backyard are removing hundreds of annoying mosquitoes and other crawly creatures. In fact, a single spider eats around 2,000 insects each year. Therefore, we should see spiders as a blessing, not a curse.
-  While all spiders have eight legs, the number of eyes differs between species. Some spiders have only six eyes and very few have four eyes, or only two eyes. The infamous recluse spiders of the family Sicariidae, for instance, have only six eyes, while some exotic species found in completely dark caves do not have any eyes at all.
-  Spiders and snails have blue blood. Since the circulatory system of spiders is different from humans and mammals, it is scientifically called haemolymph, not blood.
-  The silk of the Darwin's bark spider, *Caerostris darwini*, found on the island of Madagascar, is the toughest biomaterial in the world; it is more than ten times stronger than a comparable strand of Kevlar and twice as strong as any other known spider silk. This spider also creates the largest webs in the world — spanning up to 30 feet (10 meters).
-  It is a hoax that a person swallows an average of four (or any number of) spiders in his/her lifetime while sleeping. It is very unlikely that a spider will ever enter the mouth of a sleeping person.

Dealing with spider bites

Spider bites are more uncommon than you might think. Due to the unspecific symptoms of spider bites, people often mistake bites of mosquitoes, ticks, skin infections or allergic reactions with a spider bite — especially if a spider is seen nearby.

Spiders don't use biting as a defense mechanism against larger “predators” such as humans or pets. Depending on the species, they would rather run away or play dead than bite.

Most bites occur when the spider is faced with a desperate situation — for example, when it is pressed against skin under a piece of clothing or when it is guarding its eggs.

Symptoms of a spider bite

Most smaller spiders in Washington will have trouble puncturing human skin, even if they tried, and would leave no marks. Almost all bites of spiders that are large enough to bite through skin can lead to a short-lived local pain, redness, swelling and itchiness, much like a bee sting. The symptoms usually wear off a few hours after the bite.

Most spider bites are harmless and rarely lead to serious complications.

Bites of the black widow may lead to more severe symptoms that affect the body's nervous system. They can result in difficulty breathing, severe headaches, muscle cramps, and other systemic symptoms necessitating emergency medical attention. You can read more about [black widow spider bites here](#).

Symptoms of recluse spider bites do not differ from other spider or insect bites at first. However, in a small percentage of cases, more severe symptoms set in after 12-36 hours. In these cases, the bite area is often encircled by an expanding bruise or a reddish skin tone. You can read more on the possible effects of a [recluse spider bite here](#).

How to treat a spider bite

Any spider or insect bite that punctures the skin can lead to secondary infections if not disinfected and handled properly. The danger of such infections is much higher than a medically significant spider bite in the United States.

By following the few simple steps outlined below, you will greatly reduce the risk of infections and ease the symptoms for more severe cases.

If you are bitten by a black widow spider or a recluse spider, you should consult a medical professional. For these severe bites, several treatments such as muscle relaxants, sedatives, and analgesics are used. There is also an antivenom available to counter the effects of the venom on the nervous system when bitten by a black widow spider.

Please note: Don't try to extract or suck the spider venom out of the bite area. Instead, follow these simple first-aid instructions to reduce the venom's effects and consult a medical professional in severe cases.



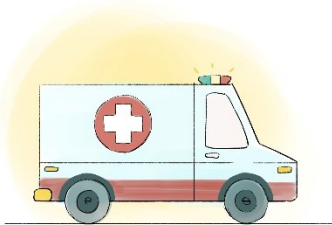
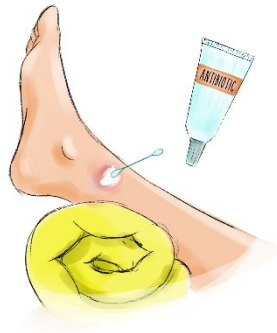
To avoid any secondary infections, clean the wound with a disinfectant.

To ease pain and reduce swelling, apply an ice pack to the bite area for 10 minutes at a time.



Elevate the bitten area to further reduce swelling. In severe cases, try to stay calm and move as little as possible while seeking medical attention. Keeping your heart rate down stops the venom from spreading faster in your system.

Apply an antibiotic ointment to the bite area if blisters develop. Take an antihistamine, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl), to help with itching.



Seek quick medical assistance for serious complications or if you have been bitten by a female black widow or a recluse spider. Try to collect the spider or get an image of it for identification by health professionals.

Spider identification resource pages

Now that we have hopefully ruled out that you are dealing with a potentially dangerous spider, we can move onto our resources to help you identify common Washington spiders. The next few pages contain a quick overview of key identification characteristics of the most common spiders in Washington: the overall body shape, web types, an overview of the eye arrangements and an overview of these species.

These resources are aimed at helping you identify common Washington spiders more quickly. If the identification guide does not immediately point you to the right overview page for your spider species, you can browse through the [spider family detail pages](#).

Most common spiders found in Washington

Despite the seemingly endless variety of spiders in Washington, most sightings and ID requests on the USAspiders.com website are for the spiders illustrated below. If your spider looks exactly like or similar to one of the ones below, you can jump right to the referenced page number in the book to find more details about the species and their relatives.



European garden spider (*Araneus diadematus*)



Furrow spider (*Larinioides cornutus*)



Black and yellow garden spider (*Argiope aurantia*)



Running crab spider (*Philodromus* sp.)



Mouse spider (*Scotophaeus blackwalli*)



Flower crab spider (*Thomisidae*)



Cellar Spider
(Pholcidae)



Yellow sac spider (*Cheiracanthium*
sp.**Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.**)



Hobo spider (*Eratigena agrestis*)



Giant house spider (*Eratigena duellica*)



Wolf spider
(Lycosidae)



Grass spider
(*Agelenopsis* sp.)



Woodlouse hunter
(*Dysdera crocata*)



Bold jumping spider
(*Phidippus audax*)



False black widow (*Steatoda grossa*)



Trapdoor spider



Ant mimicking spider (*Castianeira*
longipalpa)



Western spotted orb-weaver
(*Neoscona oaxacensis*10)

Common spider web

Neoscona - Spotted Orb-weavers

Orb-weavers in the genus *Neoscona* are commonly referred to as spotted orb-weavers or barn spiders.

Web

Spotted orb-weavers are nocturnal spiders and rebuild their webs every night. The webs are large, orb-shaped and are built several feet off the ground. They often setup their web on well-lit patios as the light attracts their main prey: small flying insects.

Bite

Like other orb-weavers, spotted orb-weavers are hesitant to bite humans or larger pets. Bites are generally comparable to a bee sting with some local pain and mild discomfort.

Species

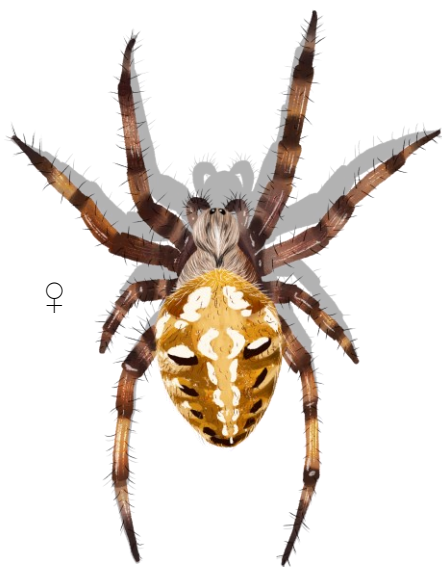
Of the eight species present in North America, three are found in Washington. While the arabesque orb-weaver (*Neoscona arabesca*) and the western spotted orb-weaver (*Neoscona oxacensis*) have been found in Washington for decades, the spotted orb-weaver (*Neoscona crucifera*) has only recently been introduced from the Eastern United States.

Identification Tips & Similar-Looking Spiders

Spotted orb-weavers are easily confused with other orb-weavers of related genera, especially with orb-weavers of the genus [Araneus](#). Spiders of the two genera can be told apart by examining the groove on the upper side of the cephalothorax (fovea). In *Araneus* spiders, the groove is transverse or almost non-existent while *Neoscona* spiders have a longitudinal groove (parallel to the body). Also, *Neoscona* spiders appear hairier than many other orb-weaver species.

Neoscona oxacensis can be confused with the less common orb-weaver species, *Aculepeira packardii*.

Size: Body size, depending on species, is 0.3-0.8 in. (6-20 mm). Males are around 30% smaller than females.



***Neoscona arabesca* – Arabesque Orb-weaver**

Range: Common throughout Washington and most of the United States

Size: Female: 0.2-0.4 in. (5-10 mm); Male: 0.2 in. (5-6 mm).

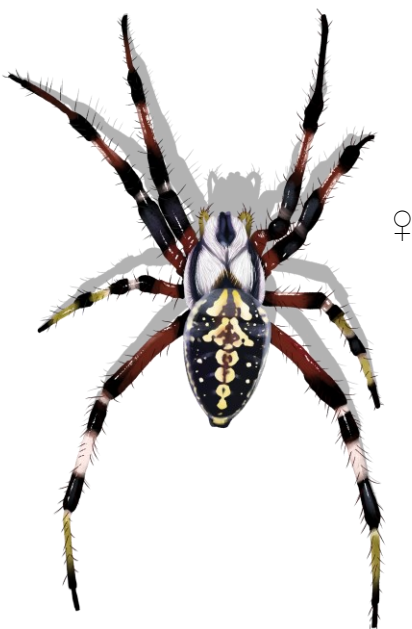
The abdomen can come in a variety of colors such as brown, orange, red, green, etc. Can best be identified by the hairy appearance and the three pairs of slanty dark slashes on the abdomen.

***Neoscona oaxacensis* – Western Spotted Orb-weaver**

Range: Common throughout Washington and the Western United States.

Size: Female: 0.4-0.8 in. (10-20 mm); Male: 0.2-0.6 in. (5-15 mm).

Has a more oval abdomen than the other *Neoscona* species. Can come in a range of colors (mostly dark) and is best identified by the 5+ bright dorsal wavy marks.



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Amaurobiidae – Hacklemesh Weavers – Page 78
Anapidae – Page 106
Antrodiaetidae – Folding-door Spiders – Page 98
Anyphaenidae – Anyphaenid Sac Spiders, Ghost Spiders – Page 90
Araneidae – Orb Weavers – Page 37
Cheiracanthiidae – Yellow Sac Spiders – Page 87
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Cybaeidae – Soft Spiders – Page 103
Desidae – Intertidal Spiders – Page 99
Dictynidae - Mesh Web Weavers – Page 105
Dysderidae – Woodlouse Hunters – Page 83
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Zodariidae – Ant Spiders –	Page 103