

# Controlling Spiders in Maryland



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK  
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# Controlling Spiders

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Many different kinds of spiders come into houses. All spiders feed on living insects and related animals, and, while some kinds cannot survive indoors, several kinds can live very well inside homes feeding on other spiders, small cockroaches, flies and ants.

Spiders enter houses by several ways. Generally they come in through screens and around windows and doors. This is a very easy matter for newly hatched spiders which are quite small. Large spiders can also enter through surprisingly small openings and cracks, so the first and most important method of control is to caulk cracks and tighten seals around doors and windows, especially those at ground level. This maintenance and repair is very important since spiders are difficult to control with insecticides.

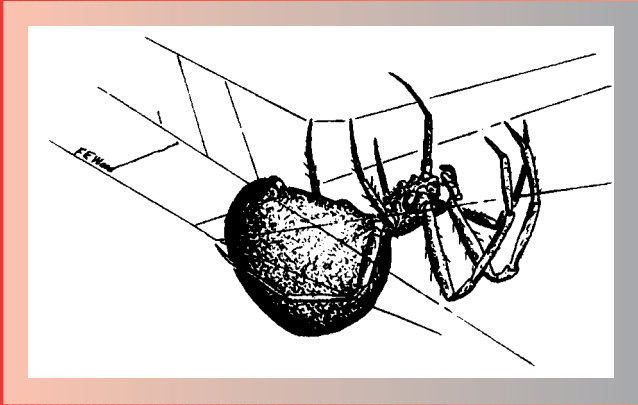
Some insecticides can be sprayed on surfaces where they dry and kill pests that later walk on them. The problem with controlling spiders in this way is that some spiders live in webs and seldom leave them. Others, while they do not live in webs, crawl on walls or ceilings where insecticides are seldom applied. Residual insecticides will help control some spiders, and they will also kill many insects which are the spider's food – thus contributing to spider control.

Certain nonpersistent insecticides, usually available in aerosol containers, sprayed directly on spiders are effective – but only for short periods.

Removal of conditions which encourage spider breeding outside the home can also contribute greatly to spider control. Trash, piles of old lumber and bricks, weeds, leaves, flower pots and any other objects piled or stacked next to the house furnish areas where spiders can live undisturbed. Without this harborage, spiders do not build up in such great numbers nor move inside so readily.



# Cobweb Spider



These common spiders enter houses when they are small. They quickly build irregular webs in areas where insects fly or alight, usually in corners of rooms or windows. When they are active in the web, the web remains relatively inconspicuous, but when these spiders leave a web or die, the web becomes covered with dust and is easily seen.

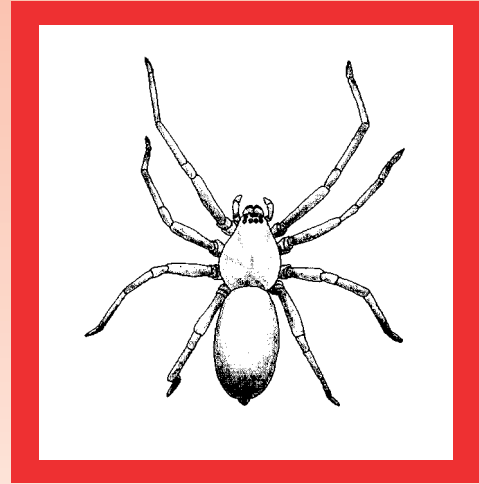
Regular use of aerosol sprays can stain walls and sometimes result in a buildup of refined oils to which dust will adhere and cause spots. Therefore, cleaning or dusting in the areas frequented by these spiders is preferred and generally sufficient for their control.

# Yellow House Spider

This small (about 1/4-inch long), rapidly moving yellow spider is becoming more and more prevalent indoors in all rooms of the house. They enter homes in the early fall and are active for several months. They then make small white webs in confined spaces where they spend the winter. In the spring, they usually emerge from their white web cells and find their way outside.

*Chiracanthium* (Ky-ra-kan-thee-um) can bite humans and cause a small irritating spot which may not heal for 8 to 10 days.

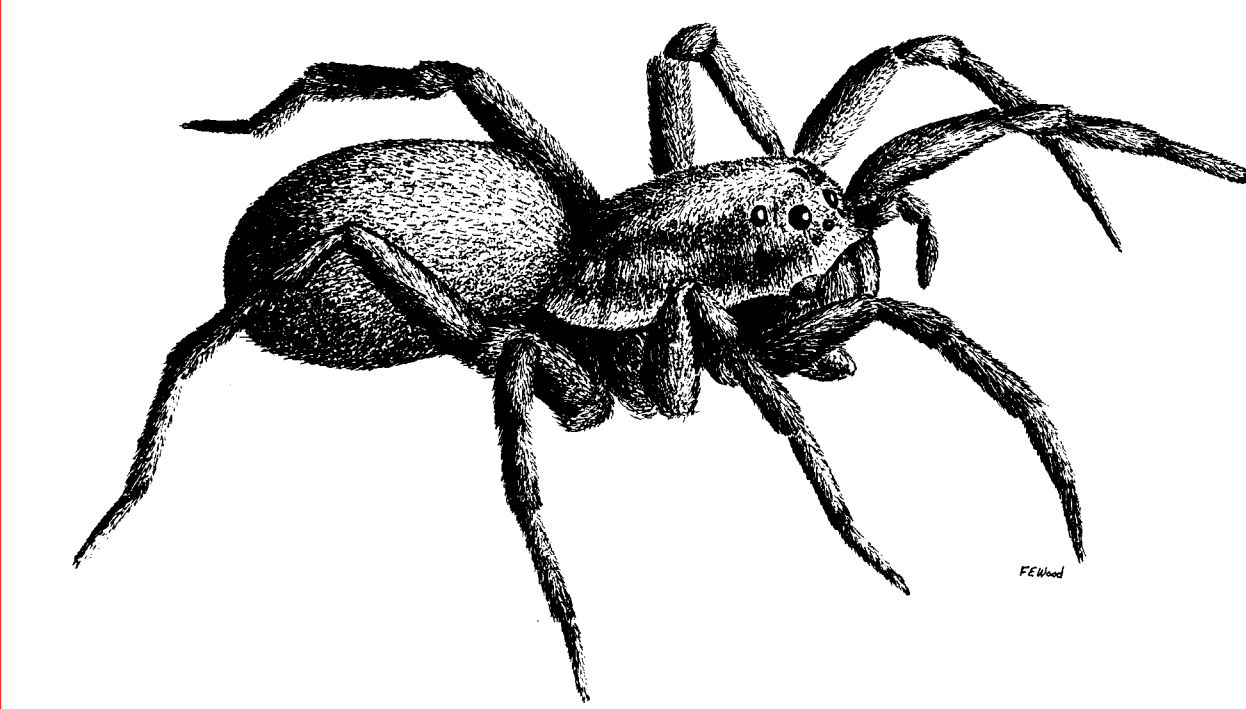
Insecticides are not too helpful because these spiders are active on walls, ceilings and other places which should not be sprayed generally. Household aerosols, sprayed directly, will kill them, but a cover spray in areas where these spiders are abundant may be necessary.



# Wolf Spider

Wolf spiders and other smaller wandering spiders come inside, usually into basements, where they are found running on the floor. These spiders do not stay in webs but run their prey down. Some of them are quite large and have a frightening appearance. They do not attack humans even if they run across one's hand or foot, but if handled or confined, they can give a sharp bite. The bite is not a dangerous one.

They come indoors most frequently in the early fall. These and other spiders are best controlled by cleaning and exclusion—i.e. keep screens in good repair, fix gaps around doors and caulk cracks around window frames, as well as around pipes and wires coming into the house. Insecticides applied around the wallboards, in cracks and behind basement shelves, storage boxes and cabinets will both kill the spiders and the insects they eat. Direct application of household sprays will kill individual spiders also.



# Jumping Spider

These spiders move in jumps or short, rapid runs. They do not build an extensive web and are frequently found around windows where they pounce on insects. Some are black and may be as large as 1/3 inch long. They are sometimes marked with red or white dots. But unlike the black widow, they are quite hairy, and their abdomen is not globular. Generally, they do not appear in large numbers and can be removed individually.

# Crab Spider

These spiders are bright white, yellow or reddish with their legs projecting from their sides giving them the appearance of a crab. They are always brought in on cut flowers and cannot survive indoors. Swatting them or vacuuming them up is all the attention necessary for their control.

# Black Widow Spider

The black widow is common in Maryland, but is not often found indoors. These species are most often found in basement window wells, beneath lawn benches or porches, and in garages, tool sheds, old lumber piles, rock piles, trash piles, and water meters. Probably they are most often brought inside in objects such as boxes, flowerpots, and baskets where they have established their irregular cobwebs.

The black widow female becomes mature in late summer and fall. She is confined to her web and is very clumsy when walking on a flat surface. Her appearance is as follows: body about 1/2 inch long, jet black with a large, round, shiny abdomen marked with a bright red hour glass shape on the belly. This red mark is easily seen because she hangs upside down in the web. Sometimes there may be small dull red marks on the top of the abdomen and at the tip. No other spider in Maryland looks like the black widow, nor is any as poisonous. Death has resulted from the bite of this spider; it is more dangerous to children than to adults.

The black widow is not aggressive. It will, however, bite instinctively when touched or pressed, and for this reason one should be very careful when working around areas where black widows may be established. Take proper precautions—wear gloves and pay attention to where you are working.

Black widow bites are sharp and painful, and the victim should go to the doctor immediately for treatment. It is important to recognize this spider and describe the symptoms accurately and fully so the physician can diagnose the trouble correctly.

To control the black widow, carefully remove all materials where it might hide. This spider can be cleaned out of an area simply by knocking the webs, spiders, and round, tan egg sacs down with a stick and crushing them under foot. Household aerosol sprays will kill the spiders when hit directly.



# Brown Recluse Spider

This spider is not found in Maryland, but it is a poisonous spider principally in the Midwest and Southwestern United States. The bite of the brown recluse spider causes a wound which takes 6 weeks or more to heal. In rare instances, it has caused death to sensitive individuals. This spider, where it is common, is very shy and reclusive. It is not active in rooms which are commonly used, but stays in storage areas, closets and infrequently used clothes and beds.

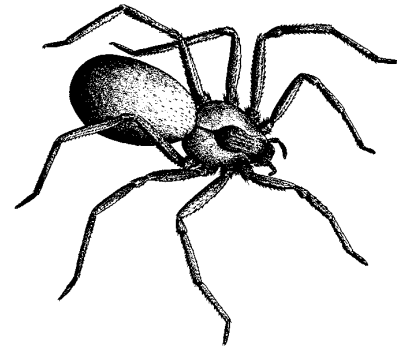
The appearance of the brown recluse spider is unique. Its body is about 1/4-inch long, the legs covering the area of a coin the size of a quarter. The front half of the spider is marked with a violin shaped design and the rear half of the abdomen is unmarked and tan or or brown. All other brown colored spiders this size have either no design at all or have stripes or spots on the front half—never a violin shaped design. Abdomens of other spiders are rarely unmarked but generally exhibit spots, triangles or bands.

The brown recluse spider makes no conspicuous web but moves about rapidly. Bites are always con-

tracted when the spider is inadvertently pressed or touched.

The brown recluse spider does not survive in Maryland. A closely related species with identical markings is, however, periodically imported from Europe. This foreign spider has been known to live in the homes in which it is introduced, but it apparently does not spread.

Find the area of the home where spiders live. Apply direct sprays on the spiders. Clean the area and caulk cracks and crevices where spiders may hide. Inspect boxes where European material is stored.



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