

Diggin' In The Dirt: The Spider Talk

By Chip Bubl
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Spiders follow a predictable path. Little spiders become bigger spiders. Most of the spiders we see now hatched last spring and live until fall or early winter. The bigger they get, the more likely they will be noticed. That is how a lot of very innocent spiders end up in jars at the Extension office.

Spiders that spend most of their lives outdoors are by and large beneficial. We have several orb weavers. They are responsible for the large circular webs found amongst our flowers and shrubs. One is a striking black and yellow and another is a more mottled mix of red, brown, and orange tones. These spiders capture insects that fly or wander into their webs. When the prey hits the web, the spider rocks the web subtly, entangling the hapless insect. The spider dashes out to inject a dab of a paralyzing agent and the insect is quickly eaten (more accurately slurped, but that is another story) or wrapped for a later meal. Often, the orb weavers will spin their webs near outside lights, having learned that the lights draw insects. These fairly large spiders are greatly beneficial and should be left alone. The wonderful children's book, *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White, drew its inspiration from White's close observation of orb weavers. If you have only seen the movie (which I have not and will not), please read the book. The story telling is magnificent.

Another common spider is a crab spider that likes to lurk at the center of open flowers. It has some capacity to adjust its color to blend with the floral color. This spider does feed on bees but also earwigs and a number of other insects. Their most common color is white with some pink highlight lines. Again, it is a generally beneficial spider despite its occasional bee meal.

Finally, we have three spiders that like houses, a lot. This is the Tegenaria family: *T. domestica* (the common house spider), *T. gigantea* (the gigantic house spider), and *T. agrestis* (the aggressive house spider, also known as the hobo spider). All three share some common patterning and coloration. By far the most abundant are the common house spider and the gigantic house spider. The gigantic spider can often be larger than three inches across if its legs were spread out. It is a startling spider and is brought into our office a lot this time of year. Most are concerned it is a hobo spider, having heard that it causes hard to heal wounds (it can) and looked up the hobo spider on line. The Tegenarias are superficially hard to tell apart but if you bring one in and I happen to be there at that time, I can teach anyone with halfway good eyesight how to tell if it is a hobo spider or not. Bottom line is that only the hobo spider in the Tegenaria group is a potential problem and they are not very common in comparison to their relatives.

I also want to say, again for the record, we do not have brown recluse spiders in Oregon, despite what you may have heard. There are two population centers for the two major recluse types: one species is found in the Los Angeles to San Diego and along the border region eastward for several hundred miles. The

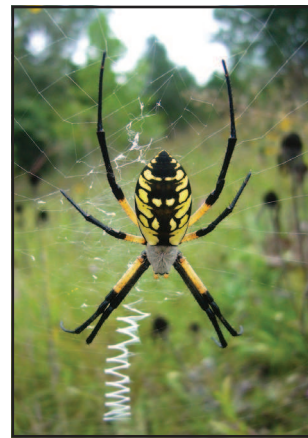
center of the other major brown recluse population is Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, and western Louisiana.

Finally, we have a few black widows but they are shy and seldom seen. They are most commonly encountered when cleaning out an old shed or garage that hasn't been touched in years. There is a large deep chocolate brown spider that looks a bit like a black widow but isn't.

Many spiders enter houses through the channels in sliding glass doors or windows. If spiders are your bane, consider exterior treatment at these points of entry. If you have more questions about spiders, please call me at the Extension office.

The OSU Food Preservation Hotline will be available Mondays through Thursdays from 9am until 4pm at 1-800-354-7319. Additionally, you can call our local office at 503 397-3462 with food preservation questions and to get your pressure canner tested.

The Extension Service offers its programs and materials equally to all people.



Free Newsletter

The Oregon State University Extension office in Columbia County publishes a monthly newsletter on gardening and farming topics (called *County Living*) written/edited by yours truly. All you need to do is ask for it and it will be mailed to you. Call 503 397-3462 to be put on the list. Alternatively, you can find it on the web at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/> and click on newsletters.

Contact information for the Extension office:

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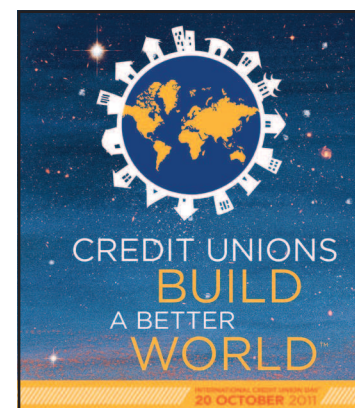
Wauna FCU Campaign to Raise Funds for Vernonia's New School

Wauna Federal Credit Union will be kicking off a campaign during the month of October to help raise money for construction of the new Vernonia School campus.

According to Pam Weller, Manager at both the Vernonia and Clatskanie branches, Wauna FCU plans to encourage all of their 15,000 members throughout the region to contribute to the campaign through a raffle drawing. "For each dollar a member contributes, they will receive

one chance to win a \$500 prize," said Weller.

The Wauna FCU campaign is being run in conjunction with International Credit Union Day on October 20th. The 2011 International Credit Union Day theme highlights the important economic and social contributions credit unions make to their communities worldwide. Credit unions continually demonstrate their ability to improve the lives of individuals, families, communities



and countries around the world, and have done so for generations.

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