

Can You Dig It?

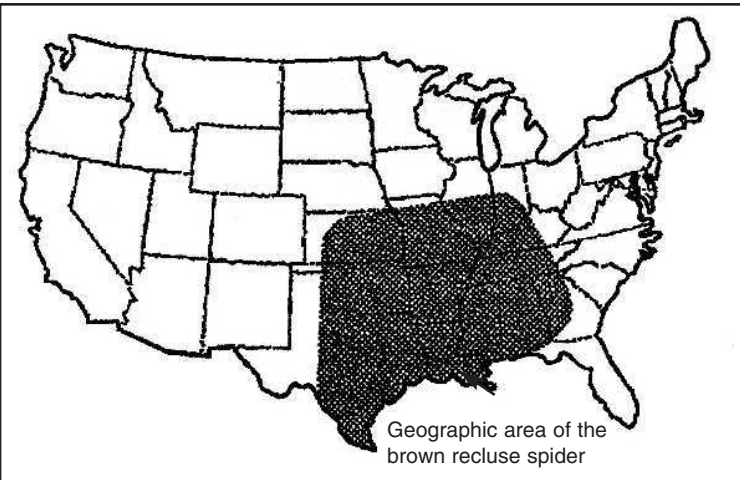
By Schann Nelson
OSU Master Gardener



Have we moved from nice spring weather to “It’s too hot for humans to survive” to “Are we SURE it’s summer?” in the space of a single month. While changeable weather is the norm in Oregon, the swing of the extremes continues to get wider. The berries on the Mountain Ash have passed through their strange alchemical change from green to orange without pausing in between, as they sometimes do – a strange and wonderful color to study.

But studying is NOT something I do in August! In my own confused mind I know I learned the truth about the brown recluse spider in the Master Gardener class. However, whenever somebody says they have been bitten by a brown recluse I never remember the answer. In the interest of clarity (and getting this done ASAP before the weather turns again) I’m going to quote extensively from our own resident expert in all things Extension Service, Chip Bubl:

We do not have brown recluse spiders! [See map]



Spiders provoke a lot of anxiety. Some people seem to be hard-wired for arachnophobia. A lot of spiders are brought in to the Extension office to see if they are poisonous ones. In a fair number of cases, there is concern that a wound or bite is

from the spider in the jar. The client generally wants to know if it is a brown recluse spider. When we explain that there aren’t brown recluse spiders in Oregon, they are stunned. (And in my limited experience are sure that is wrong, though I don’t imagine that is Chip’s experience.) The map shows the range of the brown recluse. There is another recluse population (not shown on the map) along the U.S. – Mexican border region from San Diego into Arizona and extending north into the Los Angeles basin.

Here is the local story. There are two spiders that can cause serious injury found in Columbia County: the black widow (uncommon but not unknown) and the hobo spider, also known as the Aggressive House spider (*Tegenaria agrestis*). Both can be

found in structures. It is the hobo spider that is confused with the brown recluse, not because they look alike but because both can cause wounds that fail to heal. By all accounts, the bite of the brown recluse is more serious but a hobo spider bit can be very serious, as well.

It is worth noting that all spiders inject powerful digestive enzymes into their prey. Any spider can, potentially, bite a human if the situation is right (rolling over on a spider, for example). Most people have little or no response to those bites but some will react more dramatically with swelling, redness and the like. Generally that is as far as it goes. Basically, this is an immune response to the spider enzymes. People show the same differential sensitivity to mosquito, flea or bedbug bites. Scratch the bite, though, and bacterial infections can be induced.

If you get a skin wound that doesn’t heal promptly, get medical attention. Don’t go in convinced it is a spider bite because that might skew the diagnostic process. A review of the real threat posed by the hobo spider published in the medical journal *The Lancet*, found that significant conditions such as skin cancers and staph infections were under-diagnosed if spider bites were suspected.

There are hobo spiders here. They are probably responsible for a significant percentage of the actual spider bites. But most of those bites don’t seem to progress to medically serious conditions. When in doubt, see a doctor.

That’s THE word on poisonous spiders in Columbia County. One small addition: the so-called Aggressive House spider is NOT aggressive. It hides like most spiders. The confusion apparently results from a misinterpretation of the Latin name. There are also two closely related species, the common house spider (*Tegenaria domestica*) and the giant house spider (*Tegeneria gigantea*) that look very similar to the hobo spider but are harmless to most people.

On a more personal note, and because I am one of those over-reactive people, my experience is that I’m pretty sure I’ve been bitten twice by some kind of spider – once at night reaching for a flashlight, hitting something with my hand in midair that made an audible thunk when it landed, and again when I pulled on a pair of pants that had been hanging on a hook for some time. The first time my hand swelled up like a balloon, which is pretty typical for me with yellow jacket stings. The second time, the bite was on my ankle. In both cases, while I felt the initial bite it didn’t really start hurting or swelling until the next day – wasps and bee stings hurt right away. Unfortunately, I walked all day that first day, spreading poison and, by morning, my whole foot was swollen and two tiny puncture wounds were visible.

I called my doc, got off my foot, elevated and iced it, took the prednisone he prescribed, and managed to get off without full blown cellulitis. I was lucky! If you are prone to allergic reactions and/or have compromised circulation, ANY bite or sting can be extremely dangerous.

Spider bites are rare however. Gloves, sturdy shoes, and long sleeves can protect you as you enjoy the outdoors.

Church Directory

NEHALEM VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH

Gary Taylor, Pastor
Grant & North Streets, Vernonia
503 429-5378
Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Nursery available
Wednesday Service 7:00 p.m.

VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH

Carl Pense, Pastor
850 Madison Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-1103
Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.
Children’s Sunday School

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

Marc Farmer, Branch President
1350 E. Knott Street, Vernonia
503 429-7151
Sacrament Meeting, Sunday 10 a.m.
Sunday School & Primary 11:20 a.m.
Relief Society, Priesthood and
Young Women, Sunday 12:10 p.m.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Gary S. Walter, Pastor
2nd Ave. and Nehalem St., Vernonia
503 429-8301
Morning Worship, 11:00 a.m.
Sabbath School 9:30 a.m.

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Wayne and Maureen Marr
662 Jefferson Ave., Vernonia,
503 429-0373
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

VERNONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sam Hough, Minister
410 North Street, Vernonia
503 429-6522
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship 11:00 a.m.
(meets in Youth & Family Center)
Home Group Meeting
throughout the week
at various locations

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

359 “A” Street, Vernonia
503 429-4027
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.

ST. MARY’S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Luan Tran, Administrator
960 Missouri Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-8841
Mass Sunday 12:00 Noon
Religious Educ. Sunday 10:30 a.m.

VERNONIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Grant Williams, Pastor
957 State Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-6790
Sunday Breakfast 9:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 9:45 a.m.
Children and Nursery 10:00 a.m.
Youth Group 6:00 p.m.
Preschool Mon. & Wed. 9:00 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer 6:00 p.m.
Tues. & Fri. Adult Volleyball 7:00 p.m.



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