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The Common Spiders In Texas

As winter weather approaches, spiders are sure to come inside the home. Spiders are closely related to ticks and scorpions, all belonging to the Class Arachnida. Most spiders are small and considered harmless to humans. In fact, they are beneficial to our environment by controlling insect populations. However there are two groups that are considered harmful to humans, the **black widows** and the **recluse spiders**.

As a warning, all spiders will bite if provoked. Many people are afraid of spiders and some people are allergic to their venom.

Dangerous Spiders:

Recluse Spiders

There are five species present in Texas, but only two species are considered dangerous. Their color varies from orange-yellow to dark brown and they are the about the size of a quarter. The most distinguishing characteristic is its eye pattern and violin marking on its back. These spiders have six eyes arranged in three pairs that are arranged in a semi-circle. The eyes also form the base of the violin shape that extends to its abdomen.

Recluse spiders are shy and will hide during the day. They are most active at night, so people are usually bitten at night. Recluse spiders are usually found in garages, wood piles, cluttered attics, closets bathrooms, bedrooms, and under furniture.

The recluse spiders' bite may cause effects immediately or be delayed, depending upon the amount of venom injected. The bite usually causes a stinging sensation followed by intense pain. Within 24 to 36 hours, fever, chills, nausea, weakness, and joint pain may result from the bite. The bite will also produce a blister surrounded by a swollen area. The venom kills the skin tissue producing a growing sore, until medical attention is sought.



Recluse spider (Genus *Loxosceles*).

Widow Spiders

There are four species of widow spiders that exist in Texas. Their color varies from brown to black, with two united reddish triangles, forming an hourglass on the underside of their abdomens. They are 1 ½ inches long and have eight eyes in two rows, which is a common eye pattern for spiders.

They tend to inhabit protected areas around houses and may live in garages, basements, furniture, shrubbery, rain spouts, gas and electric meters and in other undisturbed areas. They spin coarse irregular webs that expand as the spider matures.

A widow's bite may feel like a pin prick that leaves a swollen area with two red spots in the middle. The pain usually becomes worse, causing tremors, nausea, vomiting, leg cramps, perspiration, loss of muscle tone, a rise in blood pressure and even death. However, death results in less than 5% of the people bitten by a widow spider.



Widow spiders (Genus *Latrodectus*).

Other Common Spiders:

Tarantulas

These are large, hairy spiders that vary in color from brown to black. Adults are usually more than 3 inches in length. They tend to spend the day in hidden areas or under rocks. They usually hunt at night, feeding on crickets, caterpillars, and other insects. However, they can go many weeks without food.

When bitten, their toxin is not considered harmful to most people. However, they possess hairs that can penetrate the skin, which cause irritation.

Wolf Spiders

These spiders vary in color from brown to black and some have longitudinal stripes running along their bodies. Wolf spiders are large and can be seen at night under lights. They frequently enter homes and in landscapes, but their toxin is not considered harmful to humans.

Spider Bites:

To relieve swelling, apply an ice pack or alcohol directly to the bite. If a severe allergic reaction occurs, a doctor should be consulted immediately. It is always helpful to take the spider along to the doctor/hospital for positive identification that will result in proper care.

Control Options:

Seal cracks using caulk, weather stripping, and screens to prevent spider entry into the home.

Make sure that all stored boxes are taped and sealed to prevent spiders from entering.

Also, vacuum up webs throughout homes. Since some spiders lay their eggs within the webs, vacuuming will prevent these eggs from hatching.

Only use products labeled for spider control or for areas where spiders are found. These products may contain active ingredients such as permethrin or bifenthrin. For outside treatment, spray or dust outside under roof eaves, porches, and window ledges. For inside treatment, spray around windows, door frames, baseboards and in attics and other places of storage. Some spiders are hard to control, so it is best to contact a pest control professional.

Mention of commercial products is for educational purposes only and does not represent endorsement by Texas Cooperative Extension or The Texas A&M University System. Insecticide label registrations are subject to change, and changes may have occurred since this publication was printed. The pesticide user is always responsible for applying products in accordance with label directions. Always read and carefully follow the instructions on the container label.

