

Spiders are everywhere!

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The foggy fall mornings along with heavy dew this time of the year make the spider webs in our yards and gardens stand out in a spectacular way!

I had a hard time driving to work last Monday morning because as I drove through the park, the spider webs were beautiful!

I know a lot of people don't like spiders but they are really great to have around in my opinion. The only time I don't like them is on the hiking trail when I am leading hikes.

I always seem to be the one to clear the trail of stray spider webs and I really despise getting them caught in my eyelashes.

I love having them in my landscape and garden and I have had one rather large orb spider hanging out for over a month in my dahlia bed behind the house. He has been quite happy catching all kinds of insects and yellow jackets.

The most common spiders that you see now are the orb and the funnel weaver types of spiders. These are very easy to pick out.

The orb weavers are the ones who create the intricately designed webs that are aimed at catching insects that happen to fly into them.

The black and yellow garden spider is pretty common and one that I find all over my garden. Just last week, while doing a bioblitz with students from Wittenberg at George Rogers Clark Park, I spotted the marbled orb weaver for the first time. Very very cool!

The funnel weavers are those that create a matted web on top of a shrub or the grass. The matted web is slightly sloped to a hole or opening somewhere in the middle of the web.

These spiders hang out in the hole, waiting until an insect happens to land on the web. They then dart out and grab the insect, pulling them into their lair.

If you have ever had a chance to watch an orb weaver at work, then you can understand how cool they are. We watched one wrap a yellow jacket which it then saved for later. By the next morning, it had been consumed.

One of my entomology colleagues, Joe Boggs, Horticulture Educator in Hamilton County, has a great series of photos showing how the spider does the wrapping. Go to: <http://bygl.osu.edu/node/549>

Even if you don't like spiders, you might consider allowing them access to your lawn and garden. They are outstanding predators and consume insects that we don't want in the landscape (as well as some that we do).

It's different if they are in the house. Rather than spray, I suggest you smash and remove if you really don't like them. Strays may get into the house once in a while but if they don't have anything to eat, they won't survive. Caulking cracks and crevices helps to prevent them from entering your home.