

Segment for Week of 14 June 2021

Spiders

This is Julie Callahan bringing you information on shore friendly living and gardening from the Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension. This week I will be talking to you about spiders.

When you see a spider, your first instinct is to step on it or squash it, but, before you do, consider two things: (1) spiders are predators that eat insects, and (2) in North America, there are only two groups of spiders of medical concern to humans (widow and recluse spiders).

Although most spider species are venomous, in most cases, venom is used to subdue prey, and, as ubiquitous predators in every ecosystem, they will feed on whatever insect is within their reach. This means spiders should be a welcome sight, even encouraged to thrive, in your home and garden. More spiders = fewer insects.

Currently, the World Spider Catalog lists 48,889 species of spiders worldwide (with more being discovered every year). Over 3,600 species have been sighted in North America and $\pm 3,500$ species sighted in the USA. In Virginia, while estimates range from less than 100 to nearly 900 species, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Spider ID lists 98 species of spiders have been sighted in Virginia. Virginia Tech Insect ID Specialist, Eric Day, estimates there are actually several hundred species in Virginia with many yet to be sighted.

Are Spiders Beneficial? In a word, “yes.” Given the sheer volume of spiders, the volume of insects they consume annually, and their presence in virtually every microhabitat and ecosystem, they bring value to the vegetable garden as a natural predator of insects. Additionally, multiple studies have shown that spiders can, play a

key role in suppressing agricultural pests.

Should spiders be an integral part of the gardener's Integrated Pest Management protocols? In general, they already are, by the sheer volume of their numbers and presence. While welcoming spiders to your garden as a natural predator, the use of spiders as control agents would be less effective than other methods. Whenever possible, it is recommended that you leave these valuable predators alone to hunt in your garden. They deserve our appreciation, not our scorn.

For answers to Gardening questions call your local Accomack or Northampton County Extension Office. Here on the Shore call either 678-7946 or 787-1361

<http://spideridentifications.com/spiders-inus/spiders-in-virginia>

<http://usaspiders.com>

[https://resources.ext.vt.edu/contentdetail?contentid=2381&contentname=Spiders:
%20An%20Undeserved%20Bad%20Reputation](https://resources.ext.vt.edu/contentdetail?contentid=2381&contentname=Spiders:%20An%20Undeserved%20Bad%20Reputation)