**Nursery Web Spiders**

**Segment for Week of 17 January 2022**

This is Steve Rulison bringing you information on shore friendly living and gardening from the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Today we are going to talk about nursery web spiders.

Nursery web spiders are typically found off the ground, on the foliage in tall grass, meadows, wooded areas, and in gardens. They occasionally wander into houses or climb on outside walls. The large fishing spiders are primarily found near water or in moist wooded areas. They feed mostly on insects, but some species feed on very small freshwater fish or tadpoles, thus their common name.

Nursery web spiders are also ambush predators and their coloration probably serves to camouflage them in the environment. They occur in shades of brown, sometimes with strong patterns of stripes on the body or banding on the legs. Other nursery web spiders are more evenly colored.

All spiders have a life cycle of egg, immature spiderling, and adult stages. Spiders lay eggs in a silken egg sac. Nursery web spiders care for their young. When the eggs are about to hatch, a female nursery web spider spins a small silken tent, places her egg sac in it (thus the common name of “nursery web spider”), and remains to guard her young spiderlings. Most nursery web spiders probably live for about a year, maybe longer for the females. Nursery web spiders are common in Virginia and can be found throughout much of the United States.

It’s best to leave spiders alone and not handle them. As predators, all spiders can bite. However, nursery web spiders are not considered particularly venomous or medically important. Spiders are important beneficial arthropods in the environment, eating many insects and other arthropods. A general spray for spiders is not recommended unless the infestation seems severe. Use a fly swatter or spot spray individual spiders with an aerosol insecticide if you find them objectionable. Individual spiders found indoors can also be moved and released outside. Check seals on windows and doors to make sure there are no gaps where spiders may enter homes and buildings.

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

On another note, mark your calendars to participate in the Eastern Shore Agricultural Conference and Trade Show on January 26th and 27th at the Exmore Moose Lodge. Conference offerings include private pesticide recertification, certifications for Dicamba and Enlist applicators, educational sessions focusing on potatoes, soybeans, agronomics crops along with market analysis and OSHA best practices. Contact your local county Extension Agent for more information.

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