

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 11-1-06) House Spiders © 2006

If you are afraid of spiders turn the page! If you have a house that is periodically invaded by rather large brown fast moving spiders you might want to read on.

Our homes are actually inhabited by more spiders than we care to know about. They live in our basements, garages, crawl spaces, and in wall and ceiling voids. This is the time of year when we commonly think outdoor spiders are coming inside to get warm, but what they're really doing is coming in looking for a mate.

Most of these seasonal invaders are hobo spiders, scientifically known as *Tegeneria agrestis*. *Agrestis* means rural. A misinformed arachnologist incorrectly named these creatures aggressive house spiders. It is neither aggressive, nor does it usually live inside our houses. Since they move so fast and have been known to sometimes bite, their common name has become aggressive house spider. *Tegeneria agrestis* are most accurately called hobo spiders because they arrived here in our areas by rail and ship; they were hitch hikers.

In Kitsap County you'll see them from June through October and sometimes even in November or December. The only true way to identify hobo spiders is with a very powerful microscope. Robert Crawford, Curator of Arachnids at the Burke Museum at University of Washington says arachnologists use microscopes and hundreds of books and resources to identify spiders. Dr. Art Antonelli at the WSU Research Center in Puyallup is very good too. Antonelli is one of the authors of "Spiders" EB1548 full of spider information and photos.

Hobo spiders cannot climb very high, usually only a few inches before sliding back down. We find them stuck in our bathtubs and sinks. They've climbing on the plumbing and become stranded with no way of escape. Hobo spiders build funnel shaped webs outdoors and sometimes in our home's nooks and crannies. Their webbing and egg sacs can be found in outdoor crevices and under rocks.

It's still a good idea to make sure your bedding and dust ruffles do not touch the floor, to keep hobo spiders out. Some experts recommend keeping the fabrics at least eight inches above the floor.

Two other large spiders found in our homes are *Tegeneria gigantea* (quite large, usually found up in corners of our rooms and ceilings), and *Tegeneria domestica* (the domestic house spider). These spiders eat their weight in gold and will also eat hobo spiders and one another.

We need spiders in our homes. If they weren't there, we'd be overrun with insects. Spiders rarely bite humans. Many people want to use pesticides and some exterminators make their living spraying regularly for spiders and other insects. According to Crawford and Antonelli, spraying for spiders only increases the problem.

Crawford says if you're worried about the large spiders in your home and are concerned they may be hobo spiders, visit www.hobospider.com to order hobo spider traps. The traps have a pheromone to attract the spider. Pheromones can attract spiders from as far away as a foot or more. The spiders become trapped and then you can dispose of them. These traps are usually available at Ace Hardware and True Value Hardware. They can also be ordered online.

For information on hobo and other spiders visit:

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb1548/eb1548.html>

<http://www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/spidermyth/index.html>

http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/plantclinic/faqs/faqs_spdrs.html

<http://www.arachnology.be/Arachnology.html>

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