

## CONTROL OF UNWANTED SPIDERS IN THE HOME

**Basic Spider Control:** To remove a spider from your home, vacuum it up and freeze the bag, trap it in a large jar and carry it outside, or chase it out the door with a broom if it's too fast or big to catch.

**Control of Black Widows:** As with any living thing, the key to removal is to eliminate its habitat. Look for black widows beneath outdoor furniture, around wood piles, in cracks in foundations, and the corners of outbuildings with a flashlight at night, when these spiders move to the center of their webs. Make these areas less attractive to black widows by increasing light and sealing crevices. Protect children by teaching them what black widows and their webs look like and



© Joyce Gross

western black widow (*Latrodectus hesperus*) adult male

where they're likely to live. Teach them to respect all spiders, not to tease them, and to keep their fingers out of dark corners without looking first.

## WHAT TO DO IF BITTEN



Do your best to capture the spider and save it for identification. If you have any concern about infection, allergic reaction, or the condition of the bite, seek prompt medical attention.

Otherwise take these steps:

1. Stay calm and wash the bite with soap and water to prevent infection.
2. Avoid alcoholic beverages.
3. Reduce local swelling and pain by applying an ice pack to the bite area (for no longer than 15 minutes at a time).
4. Contact your local poison control center and your doctor if severe pain, swelling and/or discoloration results or continues, or if the pain spreads to other parts of your body.

## SHARING THE WORLD TOGETHER

People have been living with spiders for thousands of years. Protect yourself and family—but take the time to watch spiders too. They can entertain and teach while they're trapping and eating the insects in your home and garden.

## QUESTIONS:

If you have any questions about spiders or other wildlife in the East Bay, call or email a Park District naturalist at one of the Visitor Centers listed below.

ARDENWOOD HISTORIC FARM  
Fremont 510-544-2797, [awvisit@ebparks.org](mailto:awvisit@ebparks.org)

BLACK DIAMOND MINES  
Antioch 510-544-2750, [bdvisit@ebparks.org](mailto:bdvisit@ebparks.org)

BOTANIC GARDEN  
Berkeley 510-544-3169, [www.nativeplants.org](http://www.nativeplants.org)

COYOTE HILLS REGIONAL PARK  
Fremont 510-544-3220, [chvisit@ebparks.org](mailto:chvisit@ebparks.org)

CRAB COVE at CROWN BEACH  
Alameda 510-544-3187, [ccove@ebparks.org](mailto:ccove@ebparks.org)

SUNOL REGIONAL WILDERNESS  
Sunol 510-544-3249, [svisit@ebparks.org](mailto:svisit@ebparks.org)

TILDEN NATURE AREA/EEC  
and LITTLE FARM  
Berkeley 510-544-2233, [tnarea@ebparks.org](mailto:tnarea@ebparks.org)

Text: Katie Colbert  
Design: Nick Cavagnaro  
Cover Photo: Jumping Spider, *Phidippus* sp. (top), tarantula, *Aphonopelma* sp. (bottom), both photos by Nick Cavagnaro

This brochure is provided as a public service of the Interpretive and Recreation Services Department of the East Bay Regional Park District.



East Bay Regional Park District  
2950 Peralta Oaks Court  
P.O. Box 5381  
Oakland, CA 94605-0381  
1-888-EBPARKS [www.ebparks.org](http://www.ebparks.org)  
TRS Relay for the Hearing Impaired: 711



6/11

# Living With Spiders



East Bay  
Regional Park District



# Living With Spiders



**S**piders are amazing creatures. They may look alarming, but our common house and garden spiders are rarely dangerous to humans. They will avoid contact with you as much as possible, but occasionally bite in self-defense. You can avoid dangerous spider bites by learning to recognize black widows and their habitat requirements, and by taking simple precautions around other spiders.

## SPIDERS IN THE WILD

Bay Area spiders live in many different habitats. They eat insects and other spiders and in turn are eaten themselves by larger animals like salamanders, lizards, and birds.

## SPIDERS IN THE HOUSE

A resident spider in the home usually means there is insect food available. Spiders can help control the populations of insects you don't want in your home.

## IDENTIFICATION

**Black Widow:** Female black widows are shiny black with a red patch on the under-side of the abdomen which sometimes resembles an hour-glass. These nonaggressive spiders build tangled webs usually near the ground



photos by Nick Cavagnaro

black widows (*Latrodectus sp.*) adult females

in dark, dry, quiet places. Since female black widows rarely leave their webs, a large black spider wandering about in your house is probably not a black widow.

**False Widow:** These spiders are often mistaken for black widows. However, their shiny purplish brown to black bodies are marked, if at all, with cream colored spots. They are found in similar, though somewhat damper habitats.



Nick Cavagnaro

false widow (*Steatoda grossa*) adult female

**Tarantula:** These big "hairy" chocolate-brown to black spiders look much more dangerous than they are. They are usually seen in the late summer and fall in the warmer parts of the Bay Area when males are out searching for females.

## Violin or Brown Recluse Spider:

A spider of concern in other parts of California because of its venomous bite, the violin spider has not been found in the Bay Area (as of February 2011.)

## OTHER SPIDERS FOUND IN THE HOME

Most Bay Area residents find a variety of generally harmless spiders in their homes. Some of these may cause a reaction if they bite someone.



## SPIDER BITES

Unlike mosquitos, spiders do not seek out humans as a source of food. When spiders bite us, it is in self-defense. For example, if a spider is accidentally squeezed against the body it may bite.

What does a spider bite look like? The reaction to one of these bites may be localized at the site of the bite, or rarely, with sensitive individuals it may be a more systemic reaction, affecting the nervous or circulatory systems.

The localized reaction to most spider bites may be a painful, possibly red or purple discolored swelling at the site of the bite. These bites can blister or become infected lesions. Reaction to spider bites varies from person to person.

Be aware that insect bites and stings, tick bites, and poison oak reactions often exhibit symptoms similar to spider bites.

**Black Widow Bites:** A black widow bite feels like a painful, sharp pin prick. It may appear as small, red puncture marks surrounded by redness and accompanied by slight local swelling, and a dull or burning sensation. This pain may become intense and long lasting and be accompanied by shock, weakness, disorientation, abdominal pain and cramping, nausea, sweating, leg cramps, increased blood pressure, and breathing difficulties. The victim of such a bite may feel very sick, but the danger of death is highly exaggerated. The risks are greater, however, with children and seniors with heart, blood, or other related problems. Medical attention should be sought immediately for any black widow bite.