

Warning, some photos may cause Creepy Crawlies or Heeby Jeebies

This Month's MVB is ... The Black and Yellow Garden Spider, (*Argiope aurantia*)



Considered to be a common North American Species and not at risk of species decline.

Non aggressive and harmless to humans, but will defend themselves when threatened. Their bite is equivalent to a bee sting, causing a slight burn, itch and some redness. As always with insects some people may take a worse reaction than others so no picking them up please! When transporting a spider within your garden always use thick gloves and various utensils to do so (EX. a piece of cardboard and a container).

The striking black and yellow pattern on its body is a warning to predators and one of its only defences since its venom is considered to be mild. Females are larger than the males at a maximum of 2 inches long and remain in the center of their web throughout the day, while the males, that are more brown and not as vibrant as the females, can be found on the outskirts of the females web waiting for a chance to mate.

Also called the zig zag spider for the bold zigzags they form in their webs to attract prey, warn birds against collisions and provide structural support to their large web. They can be found almost exclusively in sunny open fields or in your home garden amongst taller plants and shrubs. Typically these webs are made in high traffic insect zones, and can reach up to 2 feet in diameter. If you find one of these webs with a Black and Yellow garden spider on it, chances are that you may have an insect problem nearby. It may be worth it to check the plants around the web for any infestations.



The females will lay their eggs near the large web in a silken sac, either in vegetation or on the side of your house. Shortly after laying her last egg sac, around the first frost, the female perishes. Eggs will hatch in later summer and early fall, once hatched the little spiderlings will float away on silk strands (also called Ballooning) to find their own garden to call home. Now you may have been in the greenhouse and seen Emma shaking a Pepper, Tomato or even a Begonia over the other annual transplants, that wasn't for fun (although it was fun), she was distributing little spiderlings that hatched overnight onto as many plants as possible to help us keep our insect control as chemical free as possible. Perhaps you even took one home with you!

So now we get into the best part about our Black and Yellow friends! Their diet!

Consisting of mostly aerial insects such as :

- Grasshoppers
- Moths
- Wasps
- Beetles
- Mosquitos
- Flies
- Even winged Aphids

So any of us who have issues with Cucumber Beetle, Cabbage Moth, or Aphids may see some benefits from having a Black and Yellow Garden Spider near affected plants.

Each adult can consume hundreds of pests each month with their young growing up to do the same, making them a great form of natural insect control. Prey is not exclusively airborne though, and any crawling insect that may wander onto a web will also be eaten as they are ultimately opportunist hunters, there are even rumors that they eat ticks!

Have you seen them in your yard?

Let us know in the comments if you have!

At Maries West River Greenhouses we all appreciate our local beneficients and believe they are ultimately the best form of natural insect control in the garden but we are not experts on the subject. The purpose of these posts is to raise awareness to the fact that not all insects are harmful and we should keep that in mind when applying insecticides for pest control.

Sources:

[Argiope aurantia: The Striking "Black and Yellow Garden Spider" of North America |](#)
[Black and Yellow Garden Spider \(Argiope aurantia\): Identification, Habitat, Bite & Facts](#)