

The Spinneret

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Well here it is mid summer and still no new office. Fear not, the new office is coming just not as soon as desired. I am however, redefining my definition of patience. In the mean time you can still find us in our temporary digs at 818 Point Brown, next to Dr. Morgan's dental office. - Ed. ■

The Dating Game:

Autumn is upon us and spiders have draped our trees and homes with gossamer garlands.

For the giant house spider it's dating season.

This large intimidating spider is the largest spider found in Washington state.



Giant House Spider

It is not native to Washington but originated in western Europe and until the 1930's it wasn't found here. Thanks to commerce and travel it has become almost ubiquitous throughout the western states.

In the U.S. they are called house spiders because Americans tend not to notice them outside but let one get in the house and see how fast hubby's wedding band turns into a license to kill.

In Europe they are referred to as "field" spiders and in truth if this spider gets trapped indoors it won't survive.

This spider is one of the fastest runners in the spider world. It weaves a funnel shaped web on or near the ground where it hides and waits for prey to come by. Then it sprints out and immobilizes its prey with venom. They will eat ants and beetles but they will also eat other spiders.

Big spiders need big prey so they often set up webs along foundations of homes because of the tendency for crawling insects to be funneled along the wall where they can easily be attacked.

The down side to being the biggest spider on the block is that you are also a tasty meal for birds and wasps. Don't think the spider doesn't know that.

Once a female spider finds a location with good food and shelter she will set up camp and stay put.

The male spider is tasked with the treacherous task of seeking out the female. As a result these amorous arachnids will often find themselves passing under a door threshold or through a garage in search of a paramour.

While regular treatments for spiders can keep females from living on the structure even the fastest acting products won't stop a spider in it's tracks. **Continued...**

Food For Thought:

Many of us choose to believe that things that are natural are inherently good.

But, let's not ignore the fact that being a part of nature, and like it or not you are a part of nature, is a competitive endeavor.

Nature is competing with you for your very survival every time the ants raid the kitchen, or a wasp grabs a piece of meat off your picnic table.

If you choose to do nothing, you can starve or get carried away by something big enough to eat you for dinner. Nature just doesn't care. **Continued...**



Damselflies:

Damselflies and dragonflies once shared a common ancestor and the basic design of this insect hasn't changed much since before the dinosaurs.

Because of their multifaceted eyes, slender bodies, and four slender wings it's easy to understand why many people don't realize that damselflies aren't dragonflies.

The easiest way to tell them apart is the way they hold their wings.

When a dragonfly lands it holds its wings straight out to the sides as if it were still in flight. A damselfly, on the other hand, holds its' wings together above its' back. **Continued...**



Damselfly

The Dating Game:

...continued

So a committed male can make it to the living room, sink, or tub long before dying.

In spite of its size and speed, this spider is very near sighted. Anything more than a couple of feet away is just a blur. So when you encounter one and stomp your foot it is as likely to run toward you as away. Fortunately, these spiders are not known for biting. Most injuries are caused while tripping over things while trying to run from them.



Giant House Spider Web

The best defense against these roaming Romeo's is good tight seals around doors and windows. Particular attention should be given to door thresholds leading outside and between the house and garage.

There's no need to plug drains if you find a spider in the sink or tub. This spider doesn't swim up drains but does get trapped where glossy surfaces prevent it from climbing. ■

Damselflies

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Even though local damselflies all look very similar to each other, there are a couple dozen species just in Grays Harbor.

Of the ones I have encountered, most are predominantly blue with black stripes or bands.

Damselflies are adept fliers capable of overtaking mosquitoes, midges and other insect prey on the wing.

In spite of being voracious predators they pose no threat to people or pets.

Damselflies have a very competitive mating process. Females may have many mates but males go to extreme measures to insure that any eggs produced contain only their offspring.

The males have developed specialized sex organs that are designed specifically to dislodge any previous paramour's contribution and deliver their own. They also attach themselves to the female in the hopes of fending off other suitors and being the last to mate with her. They can often be found flying along linked together.

Depending on the species, females will lay eggs in or on plants in or near water. After hatching young live under water feeding on the larva of other insects like mosquitoes and midges. They also consume other small aquatic organisms and worms.

Over the course of its youth it will shed its skin several times. When it reaches maturity it sheds its skin one final time, forever abandoning life under water to emerge as a winged adult. ■



Fending off the competition.

Food For Thought:

...continued

Plants don't have the luxury of running away from predators so they have developed other strategies to survive.

Plants, for all their immobility, do all kinds of ingenious things.

They con animals into eating parts of them to spread their seeds or hitch-hike on their fur. They get bugs to carry pollen between plants by bribing them with nectar.

Grasses crowd together to squeeze out competitors and thorny defenses abound.

In spite of all these physical adaptations, plants and their fungus relatives are millennia ahead of us in the world of chemical warfare.

Plants, produce chemicals in such wide array that some can selectively attract one specific insect predator to defend against one pest and a different predator for a different insect pest.

Others produce chemicals that kill other plants and still others like fox glove, giant hog weed, and nettles make chemicals that can seriously injure or kill animals and people.

Truth is, many products used in pest control are derived from plants.

It's a tough world out in nature and plants are experts at surviving in it.

We ignore this at our own peril.

Just because we are able to eat a particular plant doesn't mean it doesn't have built in defenses that can hurt you.

Take oranges for instance, if you squeeze them you get juice but if you squeeze the skin you get d'limonene. If you squirt yourself in the eye it will make you wink and if you don't peel it it's inedible. Pretty good defense huh?

If you concentrate d'limonene and squirt it on a bug most will die in a few minutes and if you rub it on your skin and stand in the sun for a few minutes you can get a blistering burn before you know what hit you.

How about apples? If you make vinegar from them you get a tasty condiment. But if you concentrate it to the strength of horticultural vinegar you have something that can burn skin and eyes on contact. (only product I've ever had in inventory with a "DANGER" label on it).

Cedar, citrus fruit, spear mint, pepper mint, rosemary, switch grass, and tobacco all have pesticidal properties.

Many of these concentrates have minimal warnings because they are classified as foodstuffs.

So, just because you find a home remedy online made from something that began as food doesn't necessarily mean it can't hurt you or the environment. ■

