

Oh, what a tangled web...

Photos and text by Ann Kamzelski

Spiders have gotten a bad rap! They have been the subject of horror movies and scary stories. Although they have been blamed for numerous deaths, most spiders are absolutely harmless to humans. There are approximately 3,000 different species of spiders in the United States, of which four are thought to be dangerous to humans. Of these, only the black widow is present in Pennsylvania, and although their bite is poisonous, it is rarely fatal.

The good news about spiders? They are one of nature's best forms of pest control, feasting on mosquitoes, flies, ants, and ticks, to name a few. Spiders also eat other spiders.

If you have ever been around a meadow on a cool summer morning, you can surely appreciate the beauty of their dew-covered webs sparkling like diamond necklaces. Pound for pound, the webbing is thought to be the strongest organic chemical substance on earth. It needs to be to catch and hold all of those insects the spider eats. Not all spiders spin pretty webs, though. Some spin funnel webs, and others, such as wolf spiders, jumping spiders, and tarantulas, don't spin webs at all.

Spiders are arachnids, not insects. With their eight legs, two body segments, fangs, venom, spinnerets for making silk, and multiple eyes, they live all over the earth from the tropical climes to the arctic regions.



