

Spiders

Spiders are not insects as many people believe. They belong to a class of animals called arachnids. Spiders have eight eyes, four pairs of segmented legs, and can grow a new leg if they lose one. They do not have antenna or wings. A spider's body can be divided into two sections. The sections are the abdomen and the cephalothorax. The legs, eyes, and mouthparts are in the cephalothorax section. Most spiders have poison glands and fangs in their jaws, which they use to inject poison into insects. This poison is called venom. Venom can paralyze an insect allowing the spider to eat the insect as food.

Spiders can live almost anywhere in the world. Some like very humid or hot temperatures and some like places that are very dry. Some spiders prefer to live under ground and others live in trees. We have all seen spiders that prefer to live in our houses.

These amazing animals usually have six fingerlike silk glands called spinnerets located beneath their abdomen. The silk comes from inside the spider's body as a liquid that is thicker than water. A spider uses this silk to make a web by squeezing the silk out of two small holes at the back of its body. These small holes are called spinnerets. At the time the silk hits the air, the silk dries into a line that looks like a long string of hair. Spiders use this silk as draglines to hang onto as the wind blows it through the air. The spider can crawl up or down on this dragline if the wind takes it somewhere it doesn't want to be. Young spiders and adult male spiders like ballooning and can release long silken threads that float or ride in the wind to new areas.

There are about 30,000 different types of spiders known to scientists. Most of them are very tiny animals that help us by eating insects. The next time you are out in the

yard and see a spider, take a few minutes to watch this most interesting animal.