# Common Florida Spiders[1]

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Spiders belong to the class Arachnida, which contains organisms with four pairs of legs, no antennae and two body regions. A shield-like carapace covers the head and the area from which the legs arise. Their mouthparts, or chelicerae, function vertically.

## Jumping spiders

The jumping spiders belong to the family *Salticidae* and are sometimes called salticids. All species are small, usually less than 15 mm long. They are easily identified by their eye arrangement, which is in three rows. Jumping spiders do not construct webs, but actively hunt prey during the day, pouncing on their luckless victims. Many are brightly colored, sometimes with iridescent chelicerae as in the genus *Phidippus* (Figure 1). Some species such as *Plexippus* (Figure 2) are commonly found on or around buildings.

Figure 1. Jumping spider.

Figure 2. Jumping spider.

## Crab spiders

Crab spiders are so named because they hold their legs to the side in a crab-like fashion. They commonly are 5 mm to 10 mm long. These spiders do not spin webs, but wait in ambush on flowers and foliage for their insect prey. Crab spiders such as *Misumenoides* spp. are often extremely well-camouflaged, blending in perfectly with the flowers they live among.

## Golden silk spider *Nephila clavipes*

The golden silk spider is found throughout Florida and the southeastern United States. The female is distinctively colored, and is among the largest orb-weaving spiders in the country. The female is 25 mm to 40 mm long and has conspicuous hair tufts on her long legs. Males are about

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4 mm to 6 mm long, dark-brown, and are often found in the webs of females. These spiders feed primarily on flying insects, which they catch in webs that may be greater than a meter in diameter. They are most commonly found in forests, along trails and at clearing edges.

Figure 3. Crab spider.

Figure 4. Crab spider.

Figure 5. Golden silk spider.

## Spiny orb-weaver, *Gasteracantha cancriformis*

The spiny orb-weaver spider is one of the most colorful and easily recognized spiders in Florida. The dorsum of the abdomen is usually white with black spots and large red spines on the margin. Females are 5 mm to 10 mm long and 10 mm to 14 mm wide. The webs typically contain tufts of silk, which may prevent birds from flying into them.

Figure 6. Spiny orb-weaver.

## Black and yellow argiope spider, *Argiope aurantia*

The argiope spiders are a large and distinctive group. Their large, conspicuous webs can often be seen along the edge of woodlands. The black and yellow *argiope* can reach a length of 25 mm. Its characteristic silver carapace and yellow-and-black markings make it easy to identify. *Argiope* spiders tend to hang head down in the middle of a medium-sized web that has thickened, zigzag bands of silk in the center.

Figure 7. Black and yellow argiope spider.

## Green lynx spider, *Peucetia viridans*

This spider is commonly encountered on shrubs, weeds and foliage. The female is 12 mm to 20 mm long, while the male seldom gets larger than 12 mm. The body is a vivid, almost transparent green, with red spots and some white markings. The legs are long, slender and covered at intervals with long black spines. These spiders have good eyesight and

hunt and stalk their prey during the daytime. They spin no webs but sometimes anchor themselves with silk. They are important predators of caterpillar pests of row crops.

Figure 8. Green lynx spider.

## Wolf spiders

Wolf spiders belong to the family *Lycosidae*. They are very common and usually found on the ground, where they are well-camouflaged. The Carolina wolf spider (*Lycosa carolinensis*), at 25 mm to 35 mm, is the largest in the United States. These spiders do not spin webs but some dig burrows or hide under debris. Like other hunting spiders, they have good eyesight and are sensitive to vibrations.

Figure 9. Wolf spider.

## Long-jawed orb-weavers, genus *Tetragnatha*

These spiders characteristically cling to a support with their short third pair of legs while holding their remaining, much longer, legs extended in front of and behind the body. They spin small webs that are 8” to 12” in diameter and catch small flying insects. They are often found in association with foliage bordering water.

Figure 10. Long-jawed orb-weaver.