They may be spooky, but spiders are good for the garden

K-State’s Upham says most spiders feed on insects that could harm flowers, vegetables

By Maddy Rohr, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Many people view spiders as pests, and the fear of spiders is one of the most common phobias among Americans. To their credit, however, they provide a great service to the home garden.

Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham said spiders feed on insects that could harm flower beds and vegetable plants, making them valuable to any gardener.

“There are two common species of garden spiders in Kansas that are active during the day,” Upham said. “The yellow garden spider and banded garden spider.”

The yellow garden spider has a black abdomen with yellow markings and black legs with a yellow or red band, Upham said. The banded garden spider has continuous bands across the abdomen and legs, alternating white and dark with orange and black bands on the legs. Both spiders spin large webs in the usual spider web shape.

To capture insects, garden spiders utilize vibrations that pass through the web from prey. They have poor eyesight, making them extremely sensitive to the vibrations.

Upham recommends leaving garden spiders alone because of their benefits to the garden, and they are harmless to humans.

Upham and his colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their garden and yard-related questions to Upham at wupham@ksu.edu, or contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.
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K-State Research and Extension local offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

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