

# Pest Profile



**Photo credit:** “Black Widow Spider” By Ken Thomas via Wikimedia.org Public Domain

**Common Name:** Black Widow Spider

**Scientific Name:** *Latrodectus mactans*

**Order and Family:** Araneae: Theridiidae

**Size and Appearance:** *Latrodectus mactans* spiders are perhaps one of the most well-known spiders due to reactions to its painful bite. In the United States, there are two species, *Lactodectus mactans* and *Lactodectus variolous*. They differ primarily in geographic region; one inhabits the North and the other inhabits the Southern United States. Both species are known for the females, which feature large abdomens with a distinctive red “hourglass” shape on the underside. Considerably bigger than the males at 12-13 mm in length, they are aggressive and known to bite. Males are considerably smaller at 5-6 mm and are dull in coloration.

	<b>Length (mm)</b>	<b>Appearance</b>
<b>Egg</b>	9.5-12 mm in diameter (sac)	Egg sacs start off white but later fade to pale brown. Generally, 185-465 eggs could be present.
<b>Larva/Nymph</b>	1-12 mm	Spiderlings resemble the adults and molt 4-9 times with each shed showing a new coloring pattern.
<b>Adult</b>	12-13 mm , female 5-6 mm, male	Females are shiny black with large abdomens. Noted for having a large red “hourglass” design present on bottom. Quick movements. Males are considerably smaller and a dull dark color.
<b>Pupa (if applicable)</b>		

**Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.):** Chewing

**Host/s or Prey:** *Araneiadae spp.* feeds on small invertebrates.

**Description of Damage (larvae and adults):** Mainly a nuisance pest as it spins webs in undisturbed areas of yards, homes, sheds, and other structures. Females have a neurotoxic venom, which sensitive individuals can have strong reactions to, often needing an anti-venom.

**References:**

Smith, E.H. and Whitman, R.C. (2007). Spiders- Black Widow and other Widow Species. In *NPMA Field Guide of Structural Pests*. (8.1.2). National Pest Management Association International.

Eiden, A.L., and Kaufman, P.E. (2013). Black Widow Spider. University of Florida, Department of Entomology. Retrieved on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016 from

[http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/URBAN/SPIDERS/black\\_widow\\_spider.htm](http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/URBAN/SPIDERS/black_widow_spider.htm)