

Western Widow



Western widow, mature female

Typical Location When Observed: Found both indoors and outdoors. Webs are established in dark, undisturbed sites. Window wells, corners of garages and outbuildings, and wood piles are among the more common sites where these spiders establish.

Importance/Damage: A spider with venom that is potentially dangerous to human. This is the common “black widow” of Colorado.

Distinguishing Features: Mature females have a bulbous abdomen and reach a length of about 1/4 to 1/3 inch. Adult females are distinctively shiny and

dark colored, generally black or occasionally dark-brown. The immature stages of both sexes and adult male widow spiders may have many red or red-orange or yellow spots and stripes on the top of their abdomen.

The distinguishing feature of all widows (*Latrodectus* spp.) is the presence of a red or red-orange “hourglass” pattern on the underside of the abdomen. However, this pattern can be highly variable with the western widow. The pattern may appear as two unconnected spots, as a roughly rectangular area or be so faint as to be barely visible.

Look-Alikes: Another cobweb spider that can be glossy black is *Steatoda grossa*. This species often has a white band running across the abdomen and lacks reddish markings.

Resources: This spider is discussed in Extension Fact Sheet 5.605, *Western Widow*.

Scientific Name: *Latrodectus hesperus*

Class: Arachnida

Order: Araneae (Spiders)

Family: Theridiidae (Cobweb spiders)



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Body Length

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