

Spider ID

The Master Gardener article on brown recluse spiders has generated quite a bit of heated debate throughout the area, with many respondents certain that the spiders are here and are a problem. In an effort to find out for certain, Dr. Vetter from the University of California has generously offered to positively identify any spider suspected of being a brown recluse. If you find a spider that you believe fits the description, please capture it carefully in a small container with a tight lid, and bring it to the Master Gardener office at 75 Santa Barbara Rd., 2FL. in Pleasant Hill, between 8am and 5pm. The office is directly behind the library on Oak Park. Directions can be found at <http://cecontracosta.ucdavis.edu/>

Please label the container with the address where the spider was located, and include your phone number so that you can be notified when the spider is correctly identified. The following information was provided by Dr. Vetter.

Description of a Brown Recluse Spider

1. Six eyes arranged in pairs, with one pair in front and a pair on either side. (Most spiders have eight eyes)-
2. A dark violin shape on the cephalothorax. (the portion of the body to which the legs attach)
3. Uniformly light-colored legs – no stripes, no bands
4. Uniformly colored abdomen which can vary from cream to dark brown depending on what it has eaten, however, it will never have two colors of pigment at the same time.
5. No spines on the legs, only fine hairs
6. Recluses make small retreat webs behind objects, never out in the open.
7. It is about 3/8” in body length. If the spider body is larger than 1/2” it is not a brown recluse.