



Jerry Faulring

Hazards of Biting Critters

On June 4, 2017 one of our field staff, an H2A worker, was bitten by what we believe to be a spider or insect. The photo above shows the damage on June 21, 2017. When he was bitten he just brushed off the predator without time to identify it. It fell back into a patch of weeds. He was wearing a long sleeve shirt and working with a string trimmer. I know, it's my fault we have weeds.



I have searched the internet and the damage is similar to that of a Brown Recluse Spider even though they are out of their natural range in Maryland and reportedly cannot survive our winters outdoors. Brown Recluse spiders have been known to appear out of their natural geographic range as hitch hikers in boxes or other moving items. I have been told they have been seen in Maryland. However, and without any proof, the injury may be Necrotizing Fasciitis (Flesh-Eating Bacteria). <https://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/>

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Brown Recluse Spider

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necrotizing-fasciitis-flesh-eating-bacteria#1

This is a rare condition caused by an injury such as a cut, abrasion or insect/spider bite. The infection may be the result of group A Streptococcus (GAS) bacteria found on the skin of almost everyone. It is the same group of bacteria that can cause strep throat. This is a serious infection that can be life-threatening if not treated promptly.

The doctors managing the matter have suggested the incident could be the result of an in-grown hair, although our worker insists there was a bite in the location of the wound. Thus, we are dealing with a mystery but still of importance

to anyone who may incur a bite or wound.

Since the incident, he has been seeing a doctor several times a week. Treatment has been antibiotics including cords with antibiotics inserted into the wound. One of the antibiotics causes severe sunburn so he was not allowed to work during the dosing. Eventually he was cleared to work, but we found indoor work for him.

Initially, I thought this was not something to be overly concerned about and simply paid for the first doctor's visit. When I learned of the pain and discomfort incurred and did a little research I knew this was not a simple medical issue and turned it into a workman's compensation claim; our third

claim since I started in the nursery business.

Assuming the injury was caused by a bite, I think it is important to review the potential for poisonous bites for those of us working in an environment where the potential exists.

Spiders are not insects but rather arachnids. Insects have six legs and three body parts. Arachnids have eight legs and two body parts.

Here is my advice if someone is bitten by a poisonous critter. See a doctor immediately. The potential for infection and tissue necrosis, as seen above, can lead to serious health issues.

Symptoms of a poisonous bite can include pain, nausea, burning, and swelling. The initial bite will not seem significant.

Other potential bite concerns in Maryland can include:

Black Widow Spiders, again out of their natural range, but they are in Maryland. Tiffany has a photo of a Black Widow spider she found in the field this spring here at the farm. Their venom is 17 times more potent than rattlesnakes, but the volume of venom is much less.

Black Widow Spiders



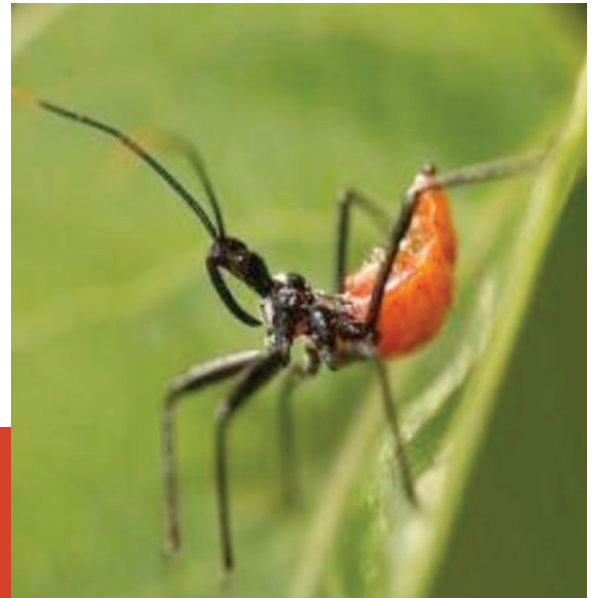
Some Wolf Spiders are native to Maryland. There are many genera of wolf spider, the photo on the right is typical. They have eight eyes arranged in three rows.

Wolf Spiders



Assassin Bugs-We think of them as wonderful predators but if provoked they will bite. Who knew – Stanton told me of this feature.

The weekly IPM Report also regularly warns us of stinging caterpillars each year which actually don't sting but transmit their poison via their hairs that become detached if we touch them. Included are the saddleback caterpillar, puss caterpillar, and lo moth caterpillar. To see photos: <https://extension.umd.edu/hgic/stinging-caterpillars>



Assassin Bugs



Puss caterpillars or Puss moth caterpillars are seen mostly in Southern Maryland and further south. Many years ago, staff called me to a block of hollies they were pruning to see an 'insect' they had never seen before. It was feeding on a few plants. I picked one out of the plant and called Stanton for an ID. He told me what it was and said "do not touch it as they are poisonous". I was lucky. We have never seen them again. 🍄

Puss Moth Caterpillars

◀ Puss Moth Caterpillar before molting

◀ Puss Moth Caterpillar after molting

I received much help for this article from:
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