

Black and Yellow Garden Spider

(*Argiope aurantia*)



Diet: Adults feed on flying or jumping animals that get caught in its web, mainly consisting of other arthropods, but have been known to eat reptiles that may become entangled in their web.

Habitat: Found in forests and gardens or by fields throughout the contiguous United States and southern Canada down to Central America, even having been found in Hawaii.

Predators: Wasps and birds are the major predators. Also, it is the host for some parasitic wasps, which sting the spider but keep it alive. Those wasps lay their eggs in the spider so that their larva can eat it when they hatch.

Behavior: Black and yellow garden spiders breed twice a year. In order to entice a female to mate with him, a male yellow and black garden spider will pluck strands of the female's web as signs of his reproductive intentions. Adults have been known to vigorously shake their webs, in what appears as a way to prevent predation. These spiders are known to create zig-zag structures near the center of their webs known as stablimenta. Their use is not fully understood yet but could be for prey capture or to lower predation.

Growth and Development: After mating females can lay one to three egg sacs, with upwards to 1,000 eggs in each one. Eggs hatch in the spring, and spiderlings can use silk to disperse with the wind (called "Ballooning"). Males die after mating.

Endangered Status: The status of this species is undocumented.

Fun Fact: The yellow and black garden spider's scientific name draws its roots to describe the spider's appearance: *Argiope* meaning "silver-faced," and *aurantia* meaning "gilded."