

Crab Spiders (Family Thomisidae)

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Several species of crab spiders (Fig. 1) may be found in gardens and landscapes. Crab spiders are common predators and contribute to the overall natural control of many pest insects. They are, however, general feeders, feeding on beneficial as well as harmful insects. These spiders do not spin a web in which to capture prey; rather, they are "ambushers," lying in wait on foliage and grabbing the prey insect as it lands nearby or moves close. Crab spiders are frequently observed in flowers.

Crab spiders vary in size from 1/8" to nearly 3/4" long. Color may be brown to green or even yellow. Some species have pink or red stripes along the sides of the abdomen. Others may have camouflage or protective coloration. The most striking characteristic of these spiders is the manner in which they hold their first two or three pairs of legs. The spiders assume a crab-like posture, with the front legs curving forward and posed somewhat like a threatened crab.

NOTE: Little is known about the toxicity of this spider, but bites seem to be rare.



**Fig. 1. A pink-striped crab spider
By B.M. Johnson.**

References:

How to Know the Spiders. Third ed. 1972. B.J. Kaston. The Pictured Key Nature Series. Wm. C. Brown Co. Publishers. 272 pp.

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