

OC VIEW

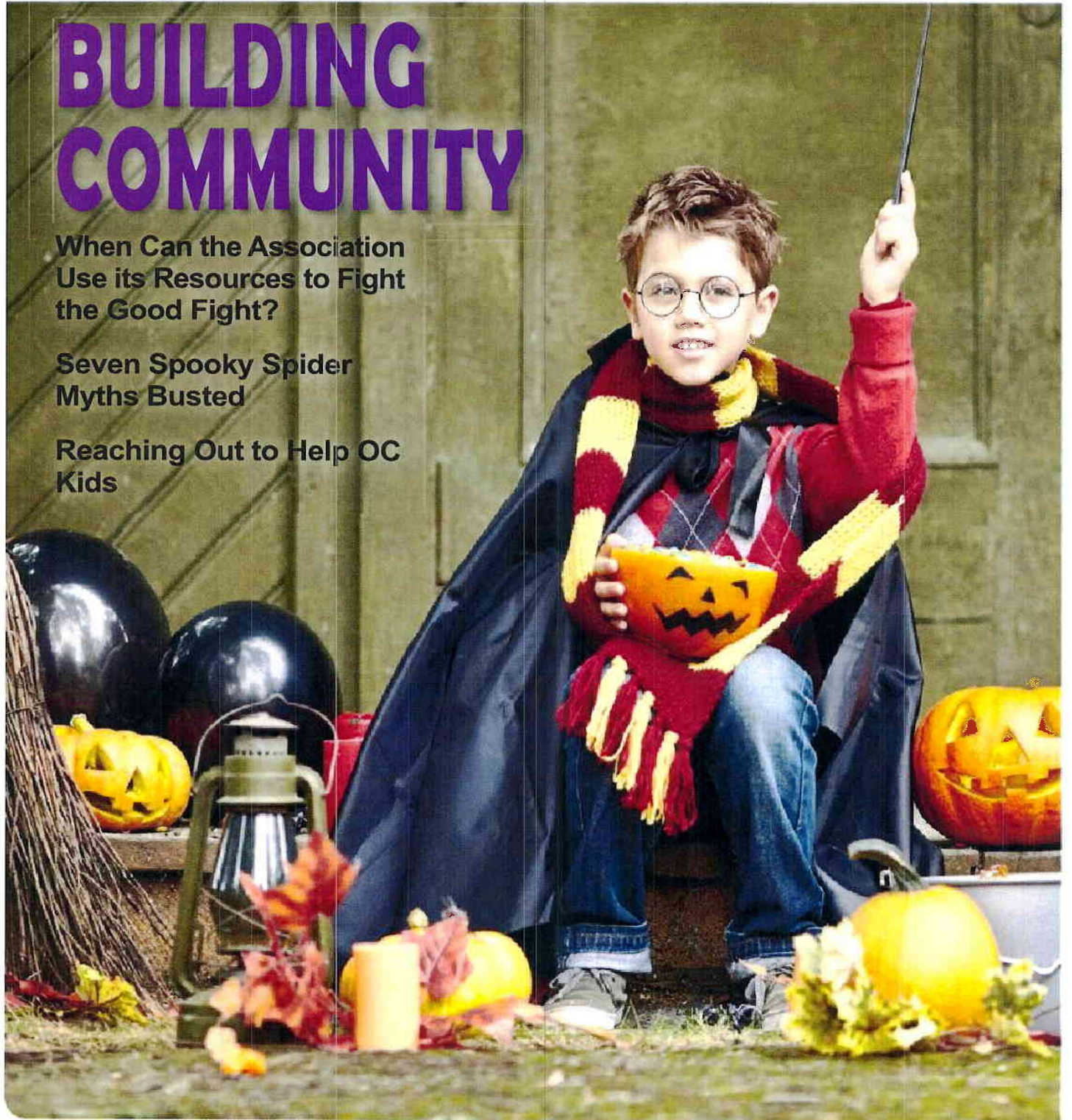
CAI - ORANGE COUNTY REGIONAL CHAPTER

BUILDING COMMUNITY

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Use its Resources to Fight
the Good Fight?**

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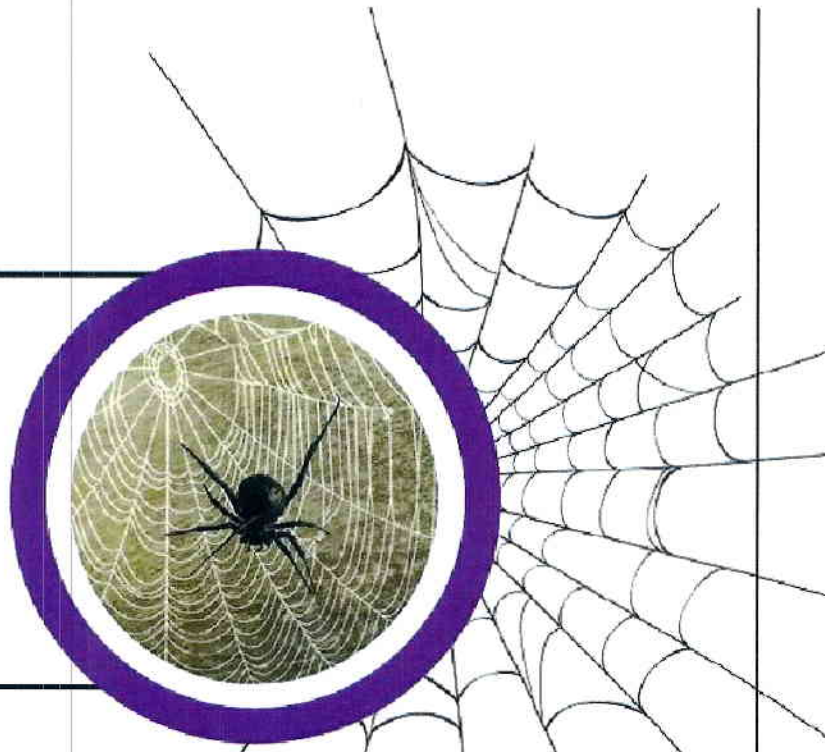


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By
Terry
Singleton

SEVEN SPOOKY SPIDER MYTHS BUSTED





Halloween is the perfect time to talk about the creepy-crawlies that frighten people the most: spiders. Many people suffer from arachnophobia. In some cases, just the sight of a web or even a picture of a spider can trigger intense fear. But the truth is that most spiders are harmless. They serve a beneficial role, catching and killing pest insects.

A lot of fears about spiders come from misunderstandings or outright falsehoods that have been spread around for years. So let's bust the seven most common myths about spiders.

MYTH # 1:

Spiders Are Aggressive.

Unlike mosquitoes and ticks, spiders do not feed on human blood. They have no reason to seek out humans just to bite them. Spiders don't usually bite humans – even when you give them the opportunity to do so.

Russell Wright, professor of Entomology at Oklahoma State University says in the report titled *Spiders: Brown Recluse, Black Widow, and Other Common Spiders*, “only one spider in the world is considered aggressive – the funnel-web spider of Australia, *Atrax robustus*, which reputedly will attack without provocation. No other spider is overly aggressive unless cornered, injured, or otherwise overly provoked.”

MYTH # 2:

Spiders Bite You In Your Sleep.

“A spider bit me while I was sleeping” or “I didn't see what bit me, so it must've been a spider” are two things pest control professionals frequently hear. People blame spiders for all types of bites, bumps, rashes and growths.

But because spiders don't feed on human blood, there's no reason for them to venture near a sleeping human. Even if you were to roll over on to a spider in your sleep, it would be very hard for a spider to bite you because its fangs are located underneath its body.

To help reduce the possibility of a spider getting into your bed, start by removing all cobwebs and thoroughly cleaning the room. Then, when making your bed, don't let your blankets or the bedspread touch the floor or walls.

If you're waking up in the morning with bumps and sores, you may want to see your doctor. There are numerous conditions that may be misdiagnosed as a spider bite. Many alleged spider bites are actually an MRSA infection, which is caused by antibiotic-resistant staph bacteria.

MYTH # 3:

Dangerous Spiders Lurk Under Toilet Seats.


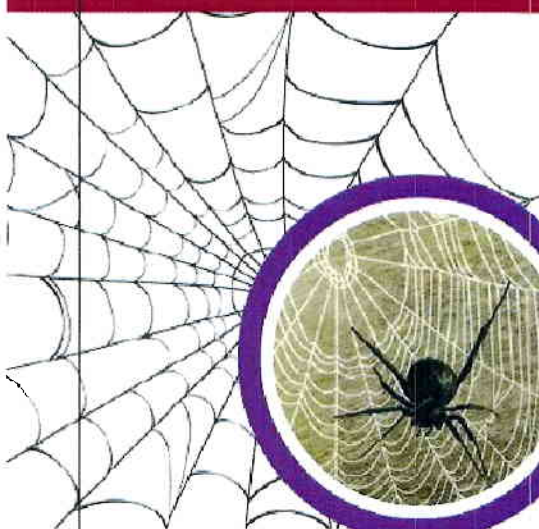
This is an internet hoax that can be traced back to September of 1999. Disguised as news, the hoax's originator claims an article in the *Journal of the United Medical Association* warns of a deadly South American spider lurking under toilet seats. Known as *Arachnius gluteus* —literally “the butt spider” — this spider supposedly killed several women who went to the bathroom at Big Chappie's Restaurant in Chicago's Blare Airport.

If you do a little homework, you'll find that the *Arachnius gluteus* spider does not exist. Also, there is no medical journal with that name, no such restaurant, and no Blare Airport. Consider this myth completely busted.

MYTH # 4:

The Orb Weaver's Web Is A “Normal” Spider Web.

If someone asked you to picture a spider web, chances are you'd imagine the orb weaver's web. These are the kind often depicted in Halloween decorations, but orb weaver's webs are not the most common type. Orb weavers construct organized, circular grid webs that tend to be large and can be up to three feet in diameter. Often sus-



Yes, it is possible that someone might find a brown recluse spider in California. It's also possible someone could win the California state lottery grand prize by buying just one ticket.

MYTH # 6:

If You Find A Spider In Your House, You Should Put It Back Outside.

Some people think it is an act of kindness: When they find a spider inside of their house, they take it outside and place it on the lawn. Unfortunately, that's like taking a wild animal that has lived its entire life in the zoo and setting it free in the jungle.

A majority of house spiders have adapted to living indoors, where the climate is comfortable and they are free from most predators. When you take them out of their protective indoor habitat and set them free in an environment that they are not used to, most will perish rather quickly. When you see a spider in your home and you don't want to harm it, probably the best thing for you to do is to leave it alone.

If having spiders in your home is not your style, you need to start a regular routine of removing all spider webs with brushes and vacuums. A good way to help keep spiders out of your home is by installing weather stripping on your doors and making sure that your window screens are in good shape. You should also seal any gaps in floorboards, cracks in walls or other holes where spiders can gain access. Also, take a few minutes and inspect things before you bring them into your home. It doesn't hurt to check. That old box of Halloween decorations from the garage may be full of spiders.

MYTH # 7:

The Daddy-Longlegs Is Poisonous, But Its Fangs Are Too Short To Bite Humans.

This tale has been around for many years, but there are no facts to support

it. There are two unrelated groups of arachnids that are called "daddy-longlegs."

Opiliones are commonly called daddy-longlegs, harvestmen, or opilionids. Most people won't ever see these unless they are turning over piles of logs or rocks. These are not true spiders. They don't produce webs and they don't have venom of any kind. For this species, we certainly know the myth is false.

The animal which many biologists call daddy-longlegs belongs to the spider family Pholcidae.

They are also known as cellar spiders. These spiders make their messy webs out of silk and are especially plentiful in places like cellars. Currently, there are no records of a pholcid spider biting a human and causing any detrimental reaction. There are also no toxicological studies testing the lethality of pholcid venom on any mammal.

Some say that a pholcid's fangs are too short to penetrate human skin. That argument doesn't go very far because the brown recluse has a similar fang structure and we know it is able to bite humans. The difference may be that the brown recluse has stronger muscles for penetration. Yes, you'll probably continue to hear this myth spread about daddy-longlegs spiders, but it is certainly not based on any known facts.

Now that these myths have been debunked, you can finally enjoy all those spooky spiders and alarming arachnids this Halloween — even if it's just the fake variety found in a haunted house. ⚙️

This article was written and submitted by Terry Singleton of Termite Terry Pest Control, Inc.

pendent in mid-air, these webs are made of radial strands of silk that look like spokes of a wagon wheel connected by numerous concentric circular silk strands.

Thin, flat sheet webs are the most common type of webs we see in the Orange County area. Sheet webs can be found low to the ground in shrubs, trees, and between blades of grass. Messy and haphazardly built cobwebs are also very common and are often found inside and around structures in our area.

You can find an abundance of orb weaver webs in the tropics but, even there, they are rarely in the majority.

MYTH # 5:

If The Spider Is Brown, It Has To Be A Brown Recluse!

Just because you found a brown spider in your closet, doesn't mean that it is a brown recluse. There are more than 3,000 species of spiders in North America, and many of them are brown.

Ask any arachnologist, entomologist, agriculture commissioner, or university researcher in California and they will all tell you the same thing: There are no populations of brown recluse spiders living in California.

The common name "brown recluse spider" refers to one species of spider, the *Loxosceles* recluse. This spider lives in the central Midwest: Nebraska south to Texas and eastward to southernmost Ohio and north-central Georgia.

