

Widow spiders (*Latrodectus*) of the United States

Northern Widow
L. variolus



Judy Gallagher¹

Southern Widow
L. mactans



Lawrence L. C. Jones²

Western Widow
L. hesperus



Lawrence L. C. Jones³

Brown Widow
L. geometricus



Karlmalie⁴

Red Widow
L. bishopi



Florida Division of Plant Industry⁵

Identification^{7,8}

Hourglass

Divided red hourglass on the underside of the abdomen.

Complete, bright red hourglass on the underside of the abdomen.

Usually complete, but can be broken in some individuals.

Orange or yellow hourglass on the underside of the abdomen.

Often has an hourglass mark, which can be broken.

Color

Glossy black.

Glossy black.

Glossy black.

Brown or tan, sometimes with geometric patterns on the dorsal side of the abdomen.

Red or reddish-orange cephalothorax and legs, black abdomen.

Other Marks

More prominent red and white dorsal markings compared to *L. mactans*.

Fewer red and white markings on the dorsal side of the abdomen.

Fewer or absent red and white dorsal markings compared to *L. variolus*.

Egg sacs are spiky, unlike the smooth egg sacs of black widows.

Dorsal side of the abdomen may have red spots or stripes.

Distribution⁶

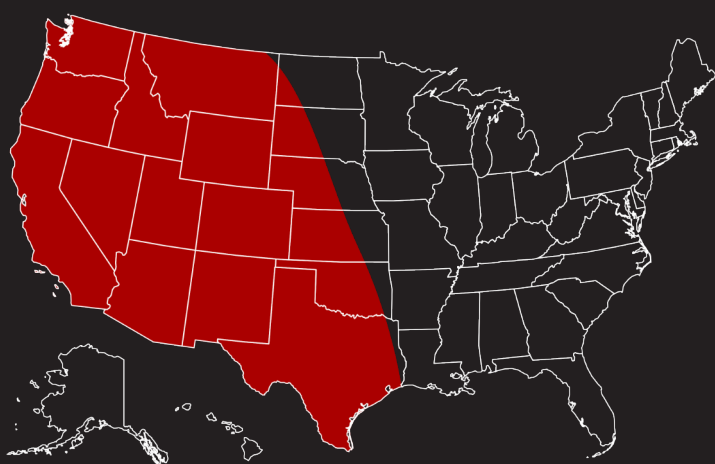
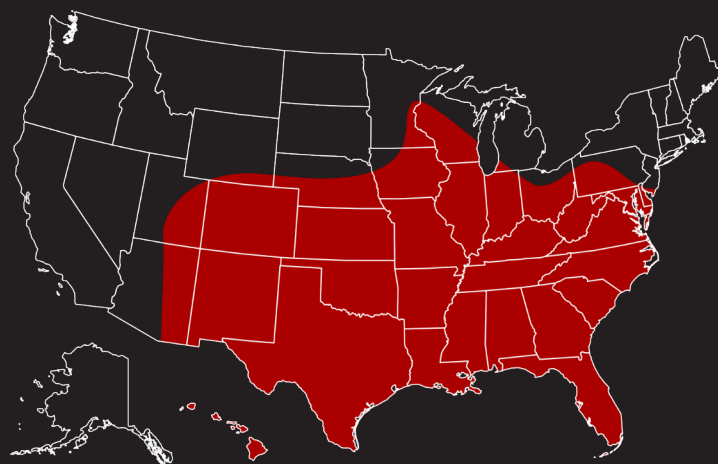
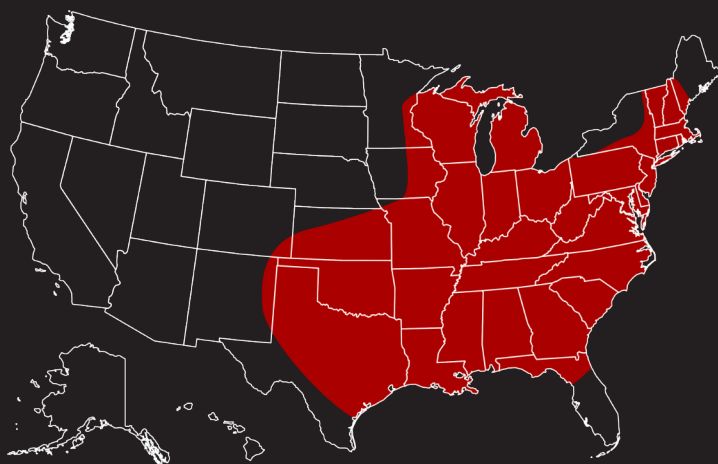
Eastern U.S. and southern Canada.

Common in the southeastern U.S.

Western U.S. and southern Canada.

Originally from Africa, now found in the southeastern U.S., Gulf Coast, California, Hawaii, and occasionally other states.

Central and southern Florida.



References

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⁴ Brown Widow by Karlmalie, available under a Public Domain License at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Latrodectus_RUSVM_egg_sac.jpg

⁵ Red Widow by Florida Division of Plant Industry, available under a Creative Commons Attribution License 3.0 at <https://www.insectimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=5192083>

⁶ Sadir M and Marske KA (2021) Urban Environments Aid Invasion of Brown Widows (Theridiidae: Latrodectus geometricus) in North America, Constraining Regions of Overlap and Mitigating Potential Impact on Native Widows. Front. Ecol. Evol. 9:757902. doi: 10.3389/fevo.2021.757902

⁷ Levi, Herbert W., and Lorna R. Levi. Spiders and Their Kin. Revised and Updated, edited by Herbert S. Zim, St. Martin's Press, 2002.

⁸ Kaston, B. J. (1970). Comparative biology of American black widow spiders. San Diego Society of Natural History Transactions, 16(3), 33-82. [cite:703279]