

'Killer' wasps, giant spiders critters that won't kill you but look like they might

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They are the stuff of nightmares—huge, creepy, crawling (and flying) bugs—and this is the time of year when you'll find them in large numbers.

But don't worry, these critters are (basically) harmless. They just look deadly.

- Cicada killer wasps

If you've been outside towards late afternoon, you've probably seen these huge wasps circling the ground, searching out their prey. The oversized wasps—they can get up to 2 inches long—are hunting the cicadas that you hear chirping during the summer months and they are not interested in you.

Sure, they have what looks to be a very long stinger, but that's to pierce the carapace of the cicada—their protein source of choice.

These solitary wasps live in in-ground burrows in sandy soil or loose clay, usually in areas with full sunlight.

The female wasps are the ones that you'll see flying around with the cicadas they've killed while the smaller males may be observed dragging a cicada along behind them. They're taking them back to the burrow, where a single egg will be laid on the cicada body as a food source for the next generation of wasps—male grubs get one cicada, female grubs

(because they're larger in size) get two or three cicadas per burrow.

Just let them be. You may think that they're swarming around you, but the males are just checking out whatever's moving, they can't sting you. These [wasps](#) are not aggressive towards humans—unless you step on one, harass them or they get tangled up in your clothing.

- Palmetto bugs

New to the South? These bugs, which are really oversized roaches, are everywhere.

Especially at night.

Outdoors and indoors.

And did we mention that, hey, they can fly??? (well, sort of)

Palmetto bugs, while not a true sign of a filthy environment, can be found near outdoor trash piles, dumpsters, mulched gardens and flower pots, indoor kitchens and baths (check the shower curtain), and your pet's food.

Ever open a kitchen cabinet and have a Palmetto bug "fly" out at you? Yep, they can take flight for short distances. It's more like falling with a purpose—to scare the living daylights out of you.

For some reason, spraying bug spray at them just makes a Palmetto bug skitter in the direction of the spray.

To get rid of them, swatting with a broom is a preferred method (gives you a bit of distance).

Seriously, to cut down on the number of these pests that you see, reduce the amount of mulch around the perimeter of your home, make sure leaking faucets and standing water (indoor and out) are taken care of, don't leave food—including pet food—out in the open and take out the trash regularly.

- Carolina wolf [spider](#)

Did you know that South Carolina had an Official State Spider?

Neither did we. That is until we were researching for this article and found that—thanks to Skyler Hutto, then a third-grade student in Orangeburg—the Carolina wolf spider (*Hogna carolinensis*) was named the official state spider of South Carolina in 2000.

Now, the Carolina wolf spider is not just any wolf spider. It happens to be the LARGEST North American wolf spider.

The average body length (not including leg measurements) of the male Carolina wolf spider is } inch. The female, because she carries her babies on her back, is larger ... about 1 inch.

Yes. The female Carolina wolf spider carries her babies, numbering up to 1,000, on her back and has been documented as living more than a year.

These arachnids usually live outside, burrowing into soft ground, but are known to wander indoors during winter months. They are also nocturnal hunters, eating ground-dwelling insects and other spiders, chasing down (these guys are unbelievably fast) or jumping on top of their prey before trapping and killing. The wolf spider's camouflaged body helps hide it from other predators.

The Carolina [wolf](#) spider will bite if it feels threatened—and although the venom is not lethal, it is considered poisonous and should be considered dangerous to humans. The bite itself may be very painful.

Best case scenario for interaction with these three pests? If you can, live and let live.

Well, maybe there's an exception for Palmetto bugs. Squash away!

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