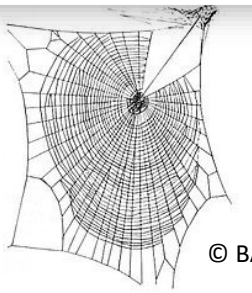
Winter Webs

Most spiders tuck themselves away into nice warm crevices during the winter months but on frosty mornings their frozen webs are more visible than ever. All spiders make silk but only some families make webs. The web structure varies between families so it's a useful ID feature, you can probably find at least 5 different types of webs around your home and garden.

Orb webs

These are the classic circular-shaped web associated with spiders. Spiders belonging to the orb web or orb weaving families Araneidae (orb weavers) or Tetragnathidae (long-jawed orb weavers) produce these webs. These are found in most habitats, generally in/stretching between vegetation. *Uloboros plumipes* , produce a similar almost-horizontal orb web made of cribellate silk (in which prey get their legs caught up in the velcro -like strands) but these tend to only be found in garden centres (where it's extra warm and cosy!). Most species construct new orb webs every day and eat them when they're done (silk is a great source of protein!)

If you find an orb-web with a missing sector, it most likely belongs to a missing sector orb-weaver (*Zygella* spp.)



Lace webs

These are the untidy looking webs usually found on the outside of houses and other structures. These webs are made with criss-crosses of silk around a central retreat. Lace webs are made by the cribellate (lace-weaving) spiders, *Amaurobius* spp . When prey touch the web they shoot out of their retreats. These spiders are easily fooled when the web is touched with a tuning fork or a rapidly vibrating electric toothbrush!

Funnel webs

These webs are not seen outside on a frosty morning. They are a familiar sight in our homes as they're made by one family of spider which includes the *Tegenaria* species (house spiders). Funnel webs are similar to lace webs as they also have a retreat but this is generally in the corner and the web is much more dense, almost like a sheet of silk, and non-sticky. These webs can outlive their creators and may even be refurbished by several occupants later on.

Tube webs

These are primitive webs with a number of trip-wires radiating out from a central retreat. These are usually constructed in holes/ crevices in walls or trees. These trip wires don't actually catch the prey, they are simple forms of silk which will alert the spider to the prey's presence. Only one family in the UK construct these sort of webs, the tube web spiders (Segestriidae). Some species are quite large, such as *Segestria florentina* (Green-fanged tube-web, pictured) , which have some impressive iridescent green jaws!

Hammock webs

These are built by the 300+ money spiders we have in the UK (Linyphiidae), this is the largest family we have. The web consists of a domed, usually horizontal, sheet of silk sometimes supported above and below by 'guy ropes'. The upper guys help to intercept flying insects, which fall down onto the sheet below where the money spiders lurk. These can be seen covering fields on frosty mornings.

Tangled webs

These three-dimensional criss-crosses of silk are built by three families of spiders. The most common example, belongs to the Daddy-longlegs spider (*Pholcus phalangioides*), that is usually found in the corners of ceilings. Comb-footed spiders (Theridiidae) also make tangled webs on low vegetation . These webs generally look untidy and unfinished, like the hammock web but without the central sheet later.

Purse webs

These are silk tubes found on the ground, built by the single British species representing the 'tarantula' side of the spider family tree, *Atypus affinis* , which occurs largely in the south in dry and grassland habitats. It builds a (usually) sealed, tube which is part underground and part above and frequently covered with soil/vegetation. Prey walking over the above-ground portion are seized by the spider waiting below and dragged inside through a slit cut in the wall by the spider's large jaws.