

A Spider's Web.

Have you ever stood before the web of a garden spider hung between two shrubs or dahlias, or along the bushes by the side of a woodland path, and wondered how the beautiful fabric was turned out by the spinner? Here is an account of the process by Prof. John Henry Comstock, in "Boys and Girls":

In making its web, an orb weaver first spins a number of lines extending irregularly in various directions about the place where the orb is to be; this is the outer supporting framework. Often the first line spun is a bridge between two quite distant points, as the branches of two separate bushes. How did the spider cross the gulf? It has no wings.

The bridge building can be easily seen on a warm summer evening, the time at which spiders are most active repairing their old nets and building new ones. The spider lifts the hind end of its body, and spins forth a thread; this is carried off by the wind until finally striking some object, it becomes fast to it. The spider then pulls in the slack line, like a sailor, and when the line is taut, fastens it to the object on which it is standing, and the bridge is formed.

After making the outward framework, the radiating lines are formed. A line is stretched across the space so as to pass through the point which is to be the centre of the orb. In doing this, the spider may start on one side, and be forced to walk in a very round-about way on the outer framework to the opposite side. It carefully holds the new line up behind it as it goes along, so that it shall not become entangled with the lines on which it walks; one or both hind feet serve as hands in these spinning operations; for as the spider has eight feet, it can spare one or two for other purposes than locomotion. When the desired point is reached, the slack is pulled in and the line fastened. The spider then goes to the point where the centre of the orb is to be, and fastening another line, it walks back to the outer frame-

work, and attaches this line an inch or two from the first. In this way all of the radiating lines are drawn. The next step is to stay these radii by a spiral line, which is begun near the centre, and attached to each radius as it crosses it. The turns of this spiral are as far apart as the spider can conveniently reach.

All of the threads spun up to this stage in the construction of the web are dry and inelastic. The spider now proceeds to stretch upon the framework a sticky and elastic line, which is the most important part of the web, the other lines being merely a framework to support it. In spinning the sticky line, the spider begins at the outer edge of the orb, and, in passing around it, fastens this line to each radius as it goes. Thus, a second spiral is made. The turns of this spiral, which is merely a temporary support, is destroyed as the second spiral progresses.

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