

## CQLesson and Challenge: Lesson 6 - SPIDERS AND SPIDER WEBS

By Carolyn Phillips (DecPainter)

While researching the subject of spiders and their webs on the internet, I often found it quite difficult to look at photographs of them without having to reach down and slap at my ankle, brush at the back of my knee or between my shoulder blades, and I have to confess to having a few spider-filled nightmares!

What is it about a spider that makes us want to bolt and run in the opposite direction? And, it's not only the spider, is it? The web itself can be nearly as disturbing – especially if we happen to walk through one! Given reactions like these, why on earth would we ever want to embroider or bead a spider onto our beautiful crazy quilts?!

In the lore of crazy-quilt making, spiders are thought to bring the quilt's owner good luck. It's not too surprising, then, to find that a great number of antique Victorian crazy quilts have spiders and spider webs embellishing them.

There are all sorts of explanations given for why these tiny creatures were thought to have such magical powers. One version says that when David was being pursued by King Saul and his soldiers, with nowhere else to hide, he ran into a cave and hid himself there. A small spider, seeing the dire situation, quickly wove her web over the opening of the cave, and when the king's soldiers saw the spider's web, they knew that no one could be hiding inside. So, David was saved by the tiny spider and lived to become the king of Israel.

**THE SPIDERS AND THE BEES:** It's not unusual to mistakenly think that spiders are insects, but while researching our creepy little friends, I found that spiders and, in fact, all arachnids (including scorpions, mites and ticks) have only two segments to their bodies: a combined (fused) head and thorax, and an abdomen. Insects have three segments: the head, followed by a separate thorax, and ending with an abdomen. Spiders have eight legs, while insects have six. In both spiders and insects, the legs are attached to the thorax. **Please see photo #1, below.**

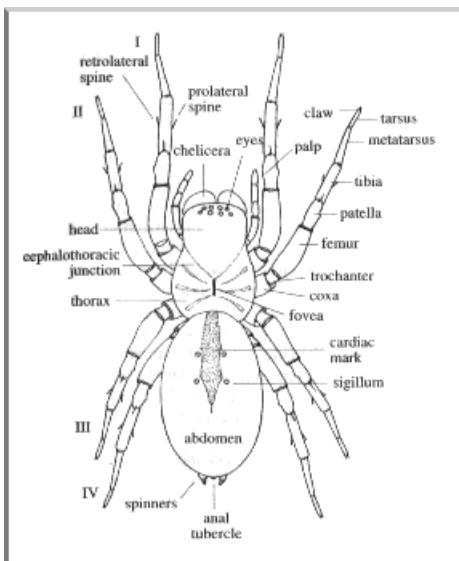


Photo #1 (Wikipedia)

And...all of this anatomy relates to us, how?? Well, for one thing, instead of having to use three beads, as would be the case with insects, it takes only two beads to portray our spider, one bead for the head-thorax combo, and a second bead for the body, thus saving that extra bead for something really, really important!?

Another important thing we ought to know is that spiders don't have antennae, but insects do. Spiders have nasty little fangs in front, and I don't know what the heck insects have...oh, yeah, some insects have nasty little stingers in the rear! Now, with all of that being said, we can leave our insect friends behind and concentrate only on spiders.

Each of the spider's eight legs has three jointed segments that look sort of like your bent index finger. The length of each of these leg segments can vary greatly depending on the type of spider, so for our purposes, we'll say that each of the three leg segments is about the same length. In other words, you have some latitude here... see photo #2, below, and photo#1, above.

Looking down at the spider from the top, the first set of legs extend out in front of the spider, and can loosely bracket the spider's head – sort of like a set of parentheses. The second set of legs will often extend forward to form a second set of parentheses. The third and fourth sets of legs will extend to the side and far enough back to hold the weight of the spider's fat abdomen. Please see photo #1, above.



**Photo #2 ([www.centennial.k12,mn.us](http://www.centennial.k12,mn.us) Blue Heron Elementary**

**NOTE: Copy and paste the spider into an email to yourself, and see what happens.**

**SPECIAL NOTE:** All of the anatomical information given above is so that you will have a general idea of how spiders are put together, and so you can then pick and choose those spider traits that you want to include in your spiders. As examples: We now know that we won't be making our spiders with three body segments, we'll use two; and we won't be putting antennae on our spiders, those are for bees and butterflies and other insects that flit, fly and/or sting. And, even though we know that a spider's leg has three segments, there are times when using two segments might suit our purposes just fine. In other words, we need to know what the rules are before we can feel free to either use them or ignore them.



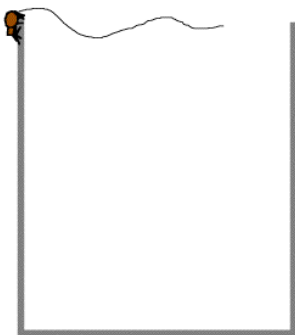
**Photo #3 Example of an Orb Web**

(Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History; Natural History Highlight)

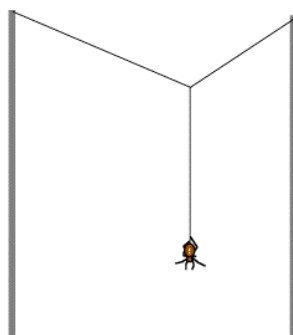
**SPIDERS' WEBS:** There are as many different types of spider webs as there are species of spiders. The common garden spider spins the most easily recognized web, the orb, which is the type we will want to use for our crazy quilts. The word “orb,” or round, pretty much describes the appearance of a fully-formed, circular-shaped web. Webs can be any part of a 360-degree circle that suits your purposes: for example, a 90 degree, or fan-shaped, web will fit nicely into the corner of a crazy quilt patch or block. Whether you want to make your web a fully-formed 360-degree circle, or a tall, skinny 10-degree triangle, or anything in between, you know that it will be an accurate and acceptable depiction of a spider web. Then, you can go nuts and have fun with it!

Our garden spider exudes two types of thread from its spinnerets, located at the base of the abdomen, the coarser “spokes” that radiate from the center of the web, and the finer “weaver” threads that connect to, and span between, the spokes. When planning your web, it’s important to give it a strong, believable foundation, using both the spokes and the weaver type threads to anchor the web in place. Please, no ends of threads flapping in the breeze, unless, of course, you like them that way. Remember, it’s always your choice! The spokes and weaver threads can be anchored to any object in your patch or block, which can be a flower, leaf, row of stitching, beaded motif, etc., or they can simply be anchored to the seams that form the perimeter of your patch, or even onto a neighboring patch, block or motif..

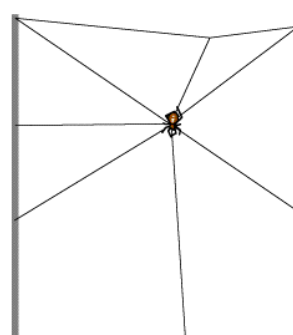
**Photos #4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, below. ([www.centennial.k12,mn.us](http://www.centennial.k12,mn.us) Blue Heron Elementary School)**



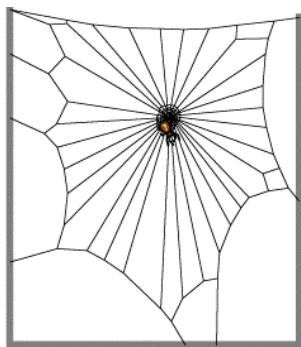
**#4 Spider spins a bridge**



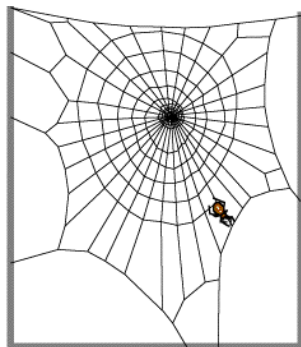
**#5 She bungee-jumps to the web center**



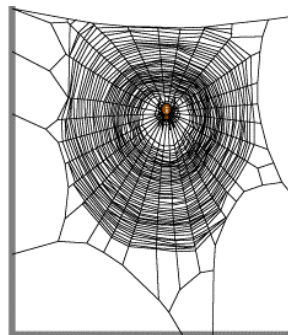
**#6 She begins making the web spokes**



#7 She makes secure attachments



#8 Spins and attaches spiral weaver thread



#9 Web finished...she waits for dinner...

Begin by establishing the web's spokes, and then add the finer horizontal weaver threads that span between, and attach to, the spokes. In the real world, a spider attaches the weaver thread to the center point of the web, and then works its way around the circular web in a spiral fashion, until it reaches the outer edge of the web, using only one continuous weaver thread. However, in the fantasy/artist's world, we can make weaver threads that form a series of individual, detached circles that begin with smaller circles at the center of the web, and get progressively larger until they reach the outer edge of the web. It is your choice. Please see photos #4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9, above.

Spiders and their webs can be any color and size that pleases you, and can be made from any materials that please you. I would guess that the first choice of crazy quilters might be to use beads for the spider's body and head, and maybe cotton or rayon embroidery thread, or a fine perle cotton thread, for the spider's legs. The spider's body and head might also be worked in satin stitch, with the legs done in stem stitch, straight stitch, etc. Webs can be made from embroidery floss, perle cotton, metallic thread, rayon floss, silk thread, nearly-transparent nylon thread, etc., etc. Webs can be worked with stem stitch, straight stitch, back stitch, or by laying a thread down and then couching it with a second thread. Hmmmm, I might be a tiny bit prejudiced, but if you happen to be a painter, you could even paint your spider and its web, and then add a couple of web-wrapped bug snacks, and perhaps a few sparkly little dew drops. Speaking of dew drops, I've been thinking that a few clear or iridescent round beads might look like tiny sparkling dew drops on our spider's web. I think we ought to try it...



Photo #10 One of my painted spiders and webs, before I learned way too much about spiders and webs. See the web-wrapped bug snack she's going after? These dew drops are painted on, but I do think we could make dew drops with the clear or iridescent beads, noted above, don't you?

**Couching:** See photos #11 and #13, below. Thread your needle with your chosen web thread, and coming from the back of the fabric, bring the needle to the front at the pinpoint tip of the fan-shaped web, and from the center of the orb-shaped web. Lay the thread onto the surface of the fabric, while smoothing and flattening it against the fabric with the opposite hand. Attach the thread down at the base, or outer edge of the web, being very careful not to stretch the thread too tightly as this might make the fabric bow. However, you don't want the thread to be too loose, either. When you're satisfied with this first thread, which will form the first of the vertical spokes, continue laying out and attaching the remainder of the spokes from the tip to the base, or outer edge of the web, being sure to attach each one to a good anchor point. Attach the thread of each spoke separately, so if one spoke breaks, you can salvage the others. Ask me how I know this. Okay, now on to the weaver threads. Please see Photos #12 and #14, below.

As the weaver thread is worked, it couches down the vertical spokes. Thread your needle with the desired thread, which can be the same as the spokes, or can be totally different. Working from left to right on the fan-shaped web, and from the center of the orb-shaped web, bring the needle to the surface at the left side of the first spoke, and then bring it over the top of the #1 spoke, and then back down through the fabric on the right side of the #1 spoke, and finally back to the front at the left side of the same #1 spoke, and bring the thread over the top of the #1 spoke and, without stretching the weaver thread, take it over the top of the #2 spoke, and then down at the right side of the spoke, catching a small bite of fabric before bringing the needle back up on the left side of the #2 spoke. Take the needle over to the right side of the #3 spoke, and without stretching the thread, take a small bite of fabric (from below the spoke), before bringing the needle back up on the left side, and on over to the #4 spoke. Continue doing this until you've couched all the spokes with the weaver thread. Move down to the next row of weaver threads if you're doing the fan-shaped web, and if you are working on the orb web, you'll start at the center of the web and keep couching until you've reached the outer edge of the web. See photos #12 and #14, below.



Photo #11 Web spokes stitched in place with rayon thread.



Photo #12 Couching the spokes with the weaver threads.





Photo #13 Orb web spokes made with metallic thread.



Photo #14 Orb web with weaver couching.

Photos #13 and #14, above, are examples of a 360-degree orb web made with Kreinik gold metallic cable #002P. I cut an 18" length and then (with great patience LOL!), I separated the three strands, and used only one of the very thin strands at a time to lay out the spokes of the web. The strands are actually quite flexible, and I had little problem sewing with them. It's really important that you attach each end of the spokes separately, so in case one of the metallic threads snap, you can still salvage the others.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** When you think about what we're doing with our weaver thread, it's actually like making a series of l-o-n-g stem stitches: Bring the needle up at the left of the spoke, go over the top of the spoke, bring the needle down on the right side and take a little nip of the fabric before bringing the needle up again on the left side of the spoke. Move on over to the next spoke, and take the thread over the top of the spoke, and then down on the right, take a little nip of the fabric and bring the needle up on the left, etc., etc. Again, it's a series of l-o-n-g stem stitches.

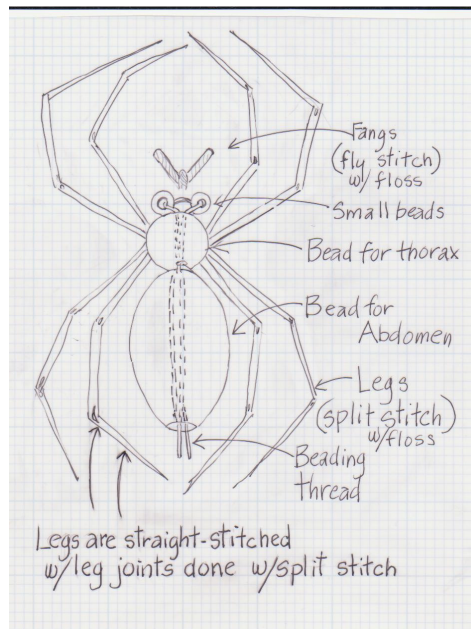
Spiders don't normally make "perfect" webs, (or, should that be, "normal spiders don't make perfect webs???"), and so you will want to make some "mistakes" in your web weaving. When you've finished doing the couching, go back and angle one thread across several others, and maybe pull a couple of the weaver sections together, etc. When you've gotten used to doing the couching/stem stitch, you'll find that it goes very quickly, and you'll be able to work in just about any direction you choose. Please see photos #15 and #16, below.



Photos #15 and #16 Webs look more realistic after going back and adding some messed-up threads.



Finished web with spider and “bug snack.”



In spite of my earlier negative comments about spiders, I really have enjoyed getting to know more about these amazing little creatures and their beautiful, dew-sprinkled webs. I hope you have a wonderful time making your spider webs and populating them with spiders, and a few web-wrapped insect munchies, too. (I still don't want to touch one, though.)

## SUPPLIES

A variety of needle sizes

Disappearing ink marking pen for pattern lines (optional)

Hoop (optional)

Beads for spiders

Special threads for webs and spiders, such as: Silk, linen, cotton or \*DMC nylon floss. \*\*Metallic threads are also a good choice. (\* and \*\*, please see more info below.)

**\*DMC nylon floss:** Cut a length of nylon floss, and then separate it into six individual threads. Wet the thread with a little bit of water and then squeegee the thread from top to bottom using your forefinger and thumb. Drape the thread over a bar to dry. Now, you can use it with no kinks or tangling of the thread. Use short lengths of the thread so it doesn't lose its sheen.

**\*\*Metallic thread:** Metallic thread or floss can make a web look magical, but it can be very difficult to work with. To avoid having to pull it through the fabric, which can cause damage, lay it onto the surface of the fabric, and then use a softer, more flexible thread to couch it down. Please refer to the “Couching” info, at the end of the lesson above. I've found that Kreinik metallic thread is an exception, and can pretty easily be used to stitch with. Do, however, use short lengths of thread so it doesn't lose its sparkle, or start looking ratty. See info following photos #13 and 14.





While at the Houston quilt show recently, our HGTV “Circle of Friends” retreat group had the pleasure of taking a “Spider and Spider Web Construction” class with Mary Pajak (Fishingwidow.) Since the rest of us are jealous that we couldn’t be there to share in all the fun, Mary is sharing her class with us here. Wait till you see her wonderful little spiders!

## SPIDER WEB AND SPIDER CONSTRUCTION

by Mary Pajak – aka Fishingwidow

It may be hard for arachniphobes to believe that spiders ever bring good luck, but this early 20th century “Good Luck to You” post card proves they do. Further evidence comes from *The Mascot Book*, by Elizabeth Villiers, published in England in 1923. According to Villiers, the spider “was popular with the Romans, who had a favorite mascot in the shape of a precious stone upon which a spider was engraved. Also they were fond of carrying little spiders of gold or silver, or any of the fortunate metals, to bring good luck in anything to do with trade.”

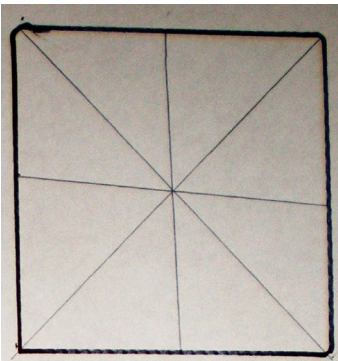
Spiders have always meant good luck to professional weavers and spinners, for obvious reasons, but corroboration of the spider’s financial symbolism is provided by a bas-relief on the outside of the Bohemian Club building in San Francisco. The club was founded in the 19th century as a place for local businessmen to set aside “Dull Care” and engage in

theatrical and sexual “Hi-Jinks,” so the image -- of a spider and the words “weaving spiders come not here” -- warns members to leave their financial schemes outside the precincts.

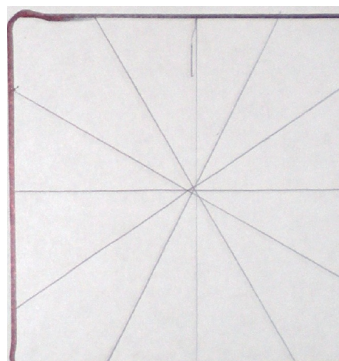
Why is the spider supposed to bring good luck in money matters? I think it is because the spider in its web is believed to attract its prey; thus the spider amulet is believed to attract money to the bearer.

## CONSTRUCTION OF THE SPIDER WEB

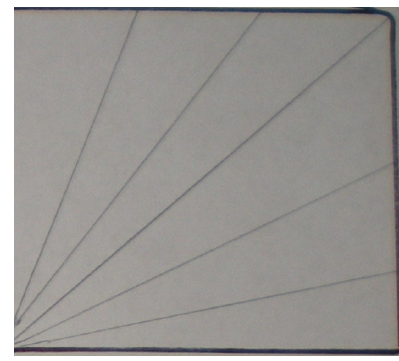
1. Select a full web design if you have fabric of a full or squarish size to fill. Numbers 1 and 2 show a full web.



1. Full Web



2. Another Full Web



3. Corner Web

2. Select a corner web if the fabric is smaller and especially if the fabric is longer or more rectangular in shape.
3. For beginning the web (straight lines) I like to use a thread such as pearl cotton or 3 strands of embroidery floss.

Just run your thread in one long straight stitch keeping them fairly taut. You don’t want them too tight or too loose. Hoop or not – whatever you prefer.

4. Select which style of inner web that you like. Number 4, which shows separate rows of circular web, or Number 5, which shows a continuous circular web, circling till you complete the web. For the inner circular web, I like to use a lighter weight thread, or a sparkly thread, or one of slightly different color such as variegated.

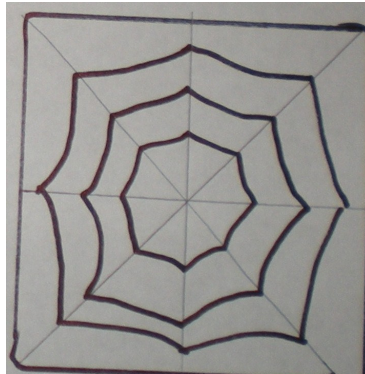


If the webs are close together, you can go from one web to the next connecting the straight-line web by using an overcast stitch (stem stitch). If it is a longer section, then you need to tack it down between the straight-line web by stitching it down using the stem stitch. I have seen photos of inner webs done by using the stem stitch continuously making the inner web, but I don't do this.

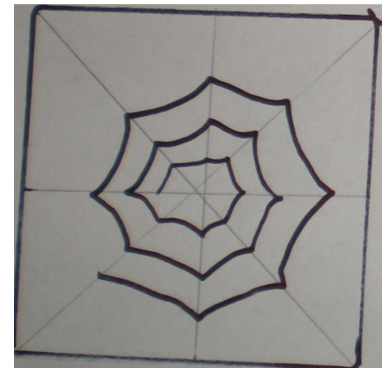
## CONSTRUCTION OF THE SPIDER WEB

5. After I am all done with the inner web, I check the long straight spider web threads to see if any of these threads need to be couched down. If I think they do, I couch them down using black sewing thread, as I want them to blend in.

6. If putting the web on a light fabric, I use black for the web. If it is a dark fabric, I have made gold spiders. You can also put small beads at the web intersections if you like.



No.4 Inner web #1

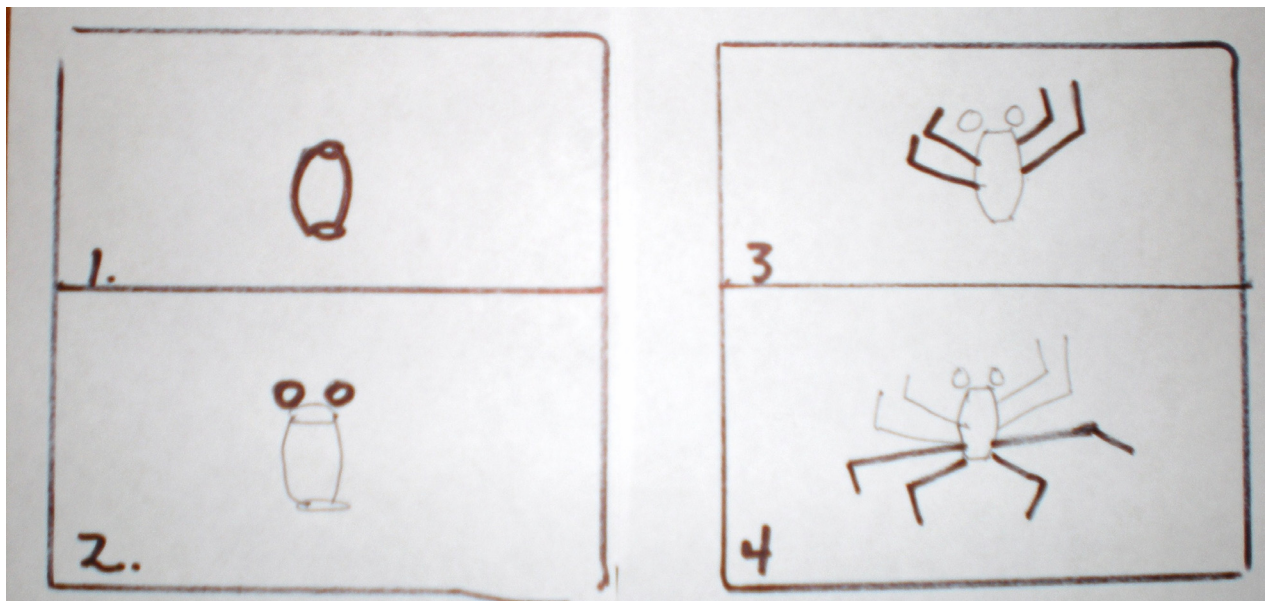


No. 5. Inner web #2

## CONSTRUCTION OF THE SPIDER

If the fabric section is large enough you can put both the web and spider into that section. If not, you can "spin the web" to the next section, especially if there is a nice small section, and put your spider there. Just run a piece of thread from the web to wherever you are putting the spider.

1. To make the spider, I use beads. If I want a black spider, the body of the spider is done with an oval shaped bead. I like to use black shiny beads with a greenish cast. Then I use two small round beads for his eyes. Same colors. If you have made a web of another color you contrast your color with a black spider or coordinate your spider with the web color.
2. First attach your long bead for the body of the spider. (#1 below)
3. Then attach the two smaller beads for the eyes of the spider. (#2 below)
4. Then make the legs.
5. Add the two forward legs first. (#3 below)



6. Then add the back two legs. I like the middle legs to be the longest. (#4 below)



**Mary's spider, on a 180-degree web. Great spider and web!**



**Mary's 360-degree orb web.**



**Mary's little dare-devil spider!  
Very imaginative and unique!**



**Shey's very beautiful spider and web.**

## Birgit's Tatted Spider

Margie (goaskmom) found this wonderful, much too realistic-looking spider, which was designed and tatted by Birgit: ([http://www.geocities.com/birgit\\_ph](http://www.geocities.com/birgit_ph))



Tatted spider photo courtesy of Birgit.  
Thank you so much!

## Tatted Spider made by Margie (goaskmom)



These are the supplies that I used to make the spiders. I used a spool of black thread that I had, it looks to be about the size of upholstery thread. The crochet hook is used to pull the thread through the holes on the button. I used Fray Check on his legs to keep them from unraveling, and I left a length of thread at the top where I finished up, thinking I could use it to sew the spider onto my project.



Here I have made the spider's very small head and half of his body, with 4 of his legs ready to be finished later. (Or all tangled up, which ever comes first!!!)





Margie's finished tatted spider. Isn't he great! Look at those creepy little toes...Eeeek!!!  
This little spider could be used as a really fun pin or set of earrings for Halloween!!

(Go to the web site shown above to see Birgit's complete instructions. Plus other simple tatted items.)

## Margie's (goaskmom) Embroidered Spider

Inspired by Birgit's tatted spider, Margie came up with an embroidered version! Clever, talented girl!

### MATERIALS

DMC Perle' cotton, color #310 in black

Needle that thread can fit through

Embroidery hoop (optional)

For a great website for viewing a bullion rose, and other bullion stitches, visit the following website:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3038363125610408846>



The spider is made mostly of bullion stitches, so please visit the website shown above, where you can view a video clip on how to make them.

Please refer to the photo above.

### **MAKING THE SPIDER'S ABDOMEN (a small square box of about ¼" )**

**From left to right, top row, stitch #1:** Make one horizontal bullion stitch, using about 12 wraps around the needle.

**Top row stitch #2:** Make a vertical bullion stitch of 12 wraps, straight down from the right side of the first bullion stitch. This is the right side of the box.

**Top row, stitch #3:** Make the bottom and the left side of the box using the same stitch as before.

**Second row, stitch #4:** Now make a 16-wrap bullion stitch, to make the first part of an X from corner to corner, and then make a second 16-wrap bullion stitch from the other corner to corner, completing the X. Note: This is what makes the abdomen look round.

### **MAKING THE THORAX**

**Second row, #5:** Make an 18 to 20-wrap bullion stitch that begins at the center top of the abdomen and extends upward.

### **MAKING THE HEAD**

**Illustration #5:** To make the spider's head, make a colonial knot of about four wraps at the top end of the thorax.

### **MAKING THE LEGS**

**Illustration #5:** Finally, using a stem stitch, make four legs that are attached to each side of the thorax, for a total of 8 legs. The legs can be positioned as desired.



**Margie's embroidered spiders.  
She says the second one looks more like a tick  
Hey, remember, ticks are arachnids, too!**