

Araneidae: *Argiope*

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Argiope is globally distributed with the most diversity in Asia and the Pacific, and with only eight species occurring in the New World (Fig. 1). Of these, most are distributed widely across the mainland and probably in the Caribbean islands, and one is cosmopolitan. With no known fossil species in Dominican amber, the genus likely spread to the New World relatively recently, hinting at high dispersal abilities. The genus is revised worldwide (Levi, 1968; 1983; 2004; Bjorn, 1997).



Fig. 1. Distribution of *Argiope* species (after Levi, 2004; Platnick, 2011).

Monophyly. Monophyletic, but a recent study failed to include its putative sister genus *Gea* (Cheng et al., 2010).

Amber species. None.

Dispersal. *Argiope* are thought to be good dispersers.

Search strategy. *Argiope* species make medium to large sized orb webs in lower vegetation, and mostly these webs contain the typical stabilimentum (Fig. 2). The spiders are diurnal, and the females are easily spotted for their size reaching up to 30 mm, and yellow and silver coloration of their round or lobate abdomen (Fig. 2). The small males live commensally in the webs of subadult and adult females (Fig. 2). Juveniles of all sizes are also easily recognized and should be collected.

Similar genera. *Gea*, smaller than *Argiope* and less colorful. Collect both.

Needed collecting. All areas are in need of new collecting, especially for DNA-ready material.



Fig. 2. *Argiope* is easily recognized by female size, color and habitus, by extreme sexual size dimorphism and by the usual presence of linear or cruciate stabilimentum in the web.

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