

Thank you for contacting Fear Not!

It is a joy for us to be included when someone decides to begin the adventure of 'spidering'. You may find a lot of conflicting information in forums and on the internet in general about how to choose a species and how to care for them.

Some of the conflicting recommendations about which species are good to start with simply comes from people having differing ideas about what makes a good "beginner" species. The fact is, what might make a good first tarantula for one person may not be a good choice for another.

Tom Moran of Tom's Big Spiders (Tomsbigspiders.com) is the absolute best resource for learning more about the many species to choose from and how to care for them. Tom brings his talent as a teacher to the world of spidering. His videos and blogs inspire ... I mean inspire us all to be the best spiderers we can be!

Your enthusiasm for these creatures can easily rub off on those around you and before you know it, spidering may not be something you do alone!

We want you, as a first-time or newer keeper, to have a good experience from the start. If you start with a species that is not interesting to you, is difficult to maintain, or is one that is a bit quicker and more defensive than you are ready for, you may shy away from spidering all together.

We offer complete "Beginner Packages" to put new keepers at ease. Much anxiety comes from making sure the habitat is suitable and the food is the right size. We take the guesswork out of that and supply the habitat, substrate, foliage, a 30 day live guarantee and food for about 2 meals. <https://fearnottarantulas.com/product-category/complete-packages/beginner-packages/>

We want to do everything we can to ensure that owning and raising up a spiderling is a positive experience and something that families and couples can enjoy together.

Let's look at some examples of when one species may be a good choice for one person and not another.

- If someone is expecting to watch the activity of a spiderling, but they choose one that stays burrowed for long periods of time, that may be a little frustrating for them.
- Another example is younger children or teens who could easily get bored and lose interest if their choice takes a long time to grow and spends much of the time burrowed as a spiderling.

- We have a customer who has some venomous snakes and routinely works with them through educational programs. He would be ok starting with one of the quicker moving, defensive species that we would otherwise never recommend for a newer keeper.

You may see the Fear Not team handling 1 or 2 species at expos and educational events. There are a couple of very docile, easy going species that do quite well coming out of their enclosure to wander around. We are always amazed by the number of people who have changed the way they think about tarantulas once they see one up close and on a hand. It is my favorite thing to do at expos and why you will not see me behind the table very often, but rather out in the crowd with one of our "ambassadors" as we call them.

Some things to consider when choosing a species:

- 1. Handling.** We do not advocate handling tarantulas for many reasons but we recognize that many keepers feel the need to do so.

Most species show signs of stress when brought out of their enclosure and are handled. It is also easy to accidentally harm them as they could bolt away and take a fall. Of course, there is also the risk of being bitten. It is best to view them as the same kind of pet you would consider fish – to observe only.

When someone is choosing their first tarantula, they often will gravitate towards a species like *Brachypelma hamorii* (Mexican Redknee), which is a great choice, but is slower growing. We will often suggest that they pair it with something that grows a little faster, stays out in the open, and has a good feeding response. This offers the first-time owner a fuller experience. If you have 1 spiderling to care for, it really is just as easy to care for another.

2. Growth rate. Though this is not usually brought up, we think it is important to consider how long it will take your spiderlings to grow. Some spiderlings burrow and hide for quite some time before reaching a size when you see them more. This can make feeding time a little unnerving for someone who is just getting started because we all like that satisfaction of knowing food has been taken and our spiderling has proper nourishment. It is also quite satisfying to have a spiderling that stays out in the open and has a good feeding response. Room temperature (70-73) is just fine for species we recommend, but keep in mind that temperature affects the growth of a spiderling more than anything, so growth rates can vary.

- 3. Watch out for teleporters!** Newer keepers have likely not yet had the opportunity to learn how their tarantula moves.

There are some that are easy going and corralling them when it is time to rehouse is drama-free. Then you have your sprinters – they will bolt for short distances and as long as you don't take your eyes off of them, can be guided back where they ought to be when needed. Some species are so quick that we call them teleporters. Given the opportunity, they will bolt and keep going, making it very difficult to find them if there is a mishap during rehousing or cage maintenance.

Most spiderlings will stay in the security of their enclosure during feeding and maintenance, but a few will take the opportunity to set forth on an adventure of their own if allowed. Knowing and learning how your spiderling moves is a matter of experience and it is better to start with a spiderling that is on the more predictable, easy going side.

- 4. Feeding response.** The greatest concern we hear from new owners is the worry that comes when their spiderling is not eating right away. After raising many spiderlings and seeing they can go quite a long time without eating, that concern goes away. For a new keeper who just wants to make sure they are doing their best to ensure the spiderling is well cared for, seeing it not eat is most always unsettling. Understanding that all spiderlings will go through times of refusing food during their molt cycle is important, but there are some species for whom this time is much shorter than others. If you are interested in a species that often refuses food, it may be a good idea to pair that with one that has a more consistent feeding response.

It is important to keep in mind that during times of not eating before molting, tarantulas do not generally get thinner, so the concern keepers have is only that the spiderling is not eating, not that it appears to be starving.

- 5. Hardiness.** There are a few popular species that we would not recommend to new keepers simply because they are more sensitive and have a higher mortality rate. The reason we do not bring them to the attention of someone just getting into keeping tarantulas is because we do not want them to start off having the experience of their first tarantula dying. It is easy to teach someone the things to do that will make a death less likely, but

the fact is you can do all the right things and sometimes it will still happen. We know this occurs more often for certain species.

Some species we recommend for newer keepers are below. There are others that could also be listed, but the species below are ones we are very familiar with and are comfortable suggesting.

Aphonopelma *. Species in this genus are known to be on the docile side. They are very slow growers, but we are especially fond of the **Aphonopelma hentzi (Texas Brown)**. They are the most industrious spiderlings I have ever raised up. Even as tiny spiderlings they are like mini bulldozers and can be seen moving their dirt from one place to another, making hills and valleys. They do stay in a burrow for quite a while though, until they are about 3/4" - 1".

Brachypelma and Tliltocatl *. Spiderlings in these genus are considered good for newer keepers. They are slower growing, but a couple do grow at a faster pace. **Tliltocatl albopilosum (Curly Hair)** tend to grow quicker than others... and check out those super curly hairs that make it quite a charming species! Spiderlings do tend to burrow but can be easily found if housed properly.

Chromatopelma cyaneopubescens (Green BottleBlue, GBB) **This is the species we recommend to pair with any other that is a slower growing burrower.** GBBs are always out in the open and being heavy webbers, they tend to web upwards as spiderlings. The feeding response is voracious with these spiderlings and it is easy to see when they are getting ready to molt. They are colorful from the beginning and change slightly with each molt which adds to the spidering experience. They appreciate a drier habitat which makes them more hardy and easy to care for. They are pretty fast growers as well. You can expect to have a 3 1/2" - 4" spiderling in about a year if you start off with a 3/4" - 1" spiderling.

Grammostola pulchra (Brazilian Black) This is probably the most sought-after species for newer keepers and experienced alike. Interestingly, within this species some spiderlings burrow and others do not. They are known to be easy-going and one of the most docile tarantulas. This is a slower growing species, but spiderlings have a great feeding response up until a couple of weeks before molting. *G. pulchra* are known to go several weeks without eating at times before molting. As they get larger that time of not eating often increases. This is a very long-lived species no matter which sex it is. It is one of the species that does not seem to show stress when coming out of it's habitat, especially as spiderlings. In fact, they will often come to the top of the habitat to go on an adventure when the lid is taken off.

Grammostola * Spiderlings in this genus are known to be great for those starting off. Most are a bit slower growing though. *Grammostola iheringi* and *actaeon* are a bit spunkier than others in the genus but they also grow much quicker and have great coloration (looking like miniature adults) from the start. They are certainly very easy to care for and are long-lived.

Lasiodora * This genus is full of large, fast growing species that are very easy to care for. Often referred to as "Birdeaters", their impressive size makes them an excellent choice as a display species. The feeding response is quite good with these spiderlings and they are known to take on prey very easily.

Psalmopoeus* Spiderlings in this genus tend to be both arboreal and terrestrial. Many would not consider this a good 'beginner' species because they are very quick. Any spiderling that is arboreal will tend to be faster and will even jump. They are very hardy and grow fast though. *P. cambridgei* is a favorite as is *P. irminia*. They do move differently than terrestrial so it is a good idea to watch a video of how a spiderling moves so you can be prepared. If obtained as a spiderling, you will learn how it moves as it grows and by the time it is an adult you will have gained the experience needed to have an adult of this species.

