

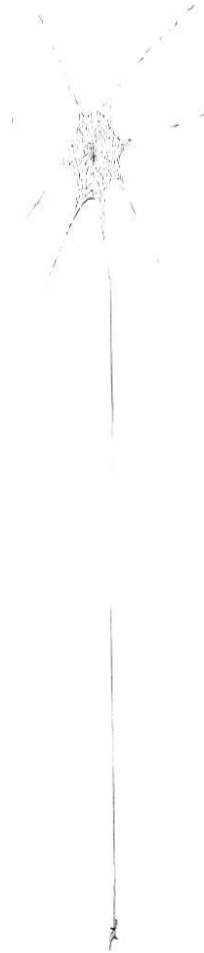
From the Garden of Cass Turnbull (Spiders)...

I'm too busy—I mean way too busy. This condition never seems to let up much anymore.

Worse yet, it seems to afflict almost everyone I know. We should have an acronym as in, "It can't be helped, she's WTB." As a result of my WTB syndrome, my emails get sloppy, which makes me sound uneducated. I don't get back to people, making me seem rude. And I can't get to the smallest of tasks, making me seem negligent. Terrible.

Working too hard indoors is not a healthy way to live. I feel guilty when I try to relax, so sometimes I rest by pursuing a useful distraction. For example, this year I did a turnabout and became enamored with ironing. When you iron too fast the wrinkles don't come out. So, ironing forced me to slow down. Once I succumbed to the pace, I found it very gratifying.

To escape the pressures of living the WTB life, I sometimes launch a search for some special object. This year the special object was a ribbon shredder. Or I will fixate on a silly project like making a display cake for the PlantAmnesty cake walk. I used caulking for icing and put metal stars and pink ribbon on it as decoration. I've made a walking tree, a partial solar system, a steam punk time machine, and, well, you get the picture.



But what I really like to do best for my mental health is take note of nature.

One day this summer when I was tearing around the house trying to get a hundred things done at once, I glanced outside my bedroom window and noticed a little dried leaf caught on a strand of spider silk floating about four inches above the ground. Huh, I thought, it seems to be hovering there. Then, as if it were an act of God, the sun suddenly illuminated a perfect spider web, complete with garden spider, about ten feet above it. The strand and

its leaf were suspended from the bottom of that web. I thought, as you might, that the silk strand and leaf were just the result of some accident that broke a web. But this looked— and I wondered if it could be—on purpose.

A good 45 minutes later, after consulting the Google, I learned what was happening. The spider uses the silk strand and the attached leaf on purpose to steady the web as it is being built. The leaf can be raised and lowered by Charlotte the spider as needed. She keeps the leaf, even as she

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reweaves the web every day or two, recycling the old webbing by eating it. A Charlotte it had to be since, as I learned, all the spiders in orb-webs are girls. The boys are quite small and just come to, well, visit. Then they are off to find another fair Charlotte. One of the stranger things I have ever seen—you may want to skip viewing this on YouTube—is a pair of orb-weaver spiders mating. It goes on for a while and is slightly creepy.

Anyway, after having googled all this, I had to take off for an errand. When I returned an hour or two later, sure enough, the leaf had been drawn up eight feet to just below the web. Huh, I thought, isn't that interesting.

Since then I have spotted and followed several more stranded leaves to their webs.

How did I miss this before? One of the reasons I love gardening is that I get to see cool and beautiful things all the time. As I work in the outside world with weather, living things, and earthy and sweet smells, I am refreshed and rested, and my mind is released to think new thoughts. This is called soft fascination. Look that up on your Google.

I wish everybody knew and believed what we gardeners know—that gardening is good for whatever ails you. And for what ails your planet for that matter. So be sure to rest your mind and enrich your day by going outside and tending something in the garden—as soon as there is a break in the rain.

You'll discover it's the perfect antidote for your too busy world.