PUMPKIN PATCH TARANTULA

Hapalopus sp. ‘Colombia’

COMPLETE KEEPER'S GUIDE

HAPALOPUS

NEW WORLD

TERRESTRIAL

BEGINNER

Quick Facts

Scientific Name	Hapalopus sp. ‘Colombia’ (possibly synonymous with H. formosus Ausserer, 1875)
Common Name	Pumpkin Patch Tarantula / Colombian Pumpkin Patch
Family	Theraphosidae — Subfamily Theraphosinae
Category	New World Terrestrial / Opportunistic Burrower
Native Range	Pacific coastal region of Colombia, South America
Adult Legspan	Large form: 3.5–4 in (8.9–10 cm) | Small form: up to 2.5 in (6 cm)
Lifespan	Females: 8–10 years | Males: 3–4 years
Experience Level	Beginner to Intermediate
Temperament	Generally docile; fast and skittish — prefers retreat over confrontation
Venom	Not medically significant for most people; elevated risk for those with bee-sting allergies
Urticating Hairs	Yes — rarely deployed, but possible when the spider feels threatened
Growth Rate	Fast — spiderlings display full adult coloration from hatching

Natural History

The Pumpkin Patch Tarantula is native to the Pacific coastal lowlands of Colombia, where it occupies a range of microhabitats including humid tropical forest edges, grassy plains, and areas rich in leaf litter. The region is warm year-round, with temperatures typically in the mid-70s to upper 80s °F, and seasonal rainfall that keeps ambient humidity consistently elevated. It is within this warm, damp environment that this species evolved its characteristic behaviors: burrowing, silk-lined retreats, and the vivid orange-and-black patterning that makes it so recognizable in the hobby.

As a terrestrial burrower, Hapalopus sp. ‘Colombia’ constructs silk-lined tunnels that extend several inches below the surface. These burrows provide shelter from predators, a refuge during molting, and a stable microclimate when surface conditions fluctuate. This species is also a prolific webber, often constructing elaborate tunnel structures across the surface of the enclosure and anchoring silk to any available decor — one of the most entertaining traits of keeping this spider.

Taxonomy note: Hapalopus sp. ‘Colombia’ has not been formally described to science. Two hobby forms exist — the “large” and “small” — which may represent geographic variants or distinct species. Both are widely believed to be related to H. formosus, but this has not been confirmed taxonomically. Keep the two forms separate to avoid inadvertently mixing lineages.

Housing

Enclosure Type & Size

Prioritize floor space and substrate depth over height. A secure, well-ventilated enclosure is essential — this species is small and extremely fast, and gaps in the lid or sides can result in an escape. Cross-ventilation (side vents plus a screened top) helps maintain airflow without over-drying the substrate.

Life Stage	Recommended Enclosure
Spiderling (< 1 in)	Ventilated deli cup or sling vial — 2–4 oz
Juvenile (1–2 in)	Small acrylic/plastic enclosure — approx. 3–4× legspan in width
Adult	8 × 8 × 8 in (20 × 20 × 20 cm) minimum; more floor space is always better

Substrate

A mix of coconut fiber (coco coir) and peat moss works well, holding moisture without becoming waterlogged and supporting natural burrowing. Straight coco fiber or a coco fiber/topsoil blend are also widely used. Depth should be at least 2–4 inches for adults. Lightly pre-moisten the lower half before setup, leaving the upper portion drier to create a natural moisture gradient.

> *Tip: Pre-start a small burrow in one corner at setup. This gives the spider an immediate retreat and reduces stress during the move into a new enclosure.*

Hides & Decor

Provide one or two cork bark pieces as anchor points for webbing. Cholla wood, driftwood, or spider wood also work well. Dried leaf litter on the surface mimics the forest floor and gives the spider material to incorporate into its burrow. Live or artificial moss can be added to the moist corner for additional humidity retention.

Temperature

A daytime ambient range of 72–82°F (22–28°C) is ideal, with nighttime temperatures no lower than 68–70°F (20–21°C). Warmer setups within this range encourage faster growth and more active feeding. No supplemental heating is required in most homes. If ambient temperatures consistently fall below 68°F, a low-wattage heat mat placed on the side (never the bottom) of the enclosure can assist.

Humidity

Maintain ambient relative humidity of 65–80%, with 70–75% being the practical target for most keepers. Keep one corner of the substrate lightly moist at all times while allowing the opposite side to remain drier. This moisture gradient lets the spider choose its preferred microclimate. Mist the moist corner lightly once or twice per week depending on how quickly your enclosure dries. Spiderlings require slightly higher humidity and are more vulnerable to desiccation than adults.

Feeding

Prey & Sizing

This species is a voracious and enthusiastic feeder. Dubia roaches and crickets are the staples for most keepers; mealworms or waxworms can be offered occasionally as supplements. Prey should be no larger than the width of the spider’s abdomen — oversized prey can injure a spider, especially after a molt. Spiderlings do well on flightless fruit flies, pinhead crickets, or small roach nymphs.

Feeding Frequency

Life Stage	Prey Type	Frequency
Spiderling	Fruit flies / pinhead crickets	Every 2–3 days
Juvenile	Small crickets / small roach nymphs	Every 4–5 days
Sub-adult/Adult	Med. crickets / small dubia roaches	Every 7–14 days

Refusal & Fasting

Food refusal is normal and should not trigger alarm. This species will stop eating in the weeks before a molt, sometimes sealing its burrow entirely. Adults can safely fast for several weeks without issue. Always remove uneaten prey within 24 hours. Avoid overfeeding — a slightly slim abdomen is preferable to an obese one, which creates risk during falls and molts.

Water

Provide a small, shallow water dish at all times. A bottle cap or small jar lid works well for adults; for spiderlings, a moist cotton ball or tiny depression in the substrate is sufficient. Refresh the water dish at least twice weekly or whenever it appears dirty. Lightly misting part of the enclosure webbing each day allows the spider to drink from droplets, which mirrors natural drinking behavior.

Handling

Handling is not recommended. While Hapalopus sp. ‘Colombia’ is not aggressive and bites are rare, its small size and sudden bursts of speed make safe handling extremely difficult. A short drop from hand height can be fatal to this species. During enclosure maintenance, work slowly, keep a catch cup nearby, and use a soft brush to guide the spider if needed. Any keeper who chooses to handle does so at their own discretion.

Molting

Signs of an Upcoming Molt

Watch for: sustained food refusal, increased webbing activity, burrowing or sealing the burrow entrance with silk and substrate, abdomen darkening toward the center, reduced movement, and lethargy. Spiderlings can molt as frequently as once a month during fast-growth phases; adults molt every several months to annually.

During the Molt

Never disturb a molting spider. The process can take anywhere from a few hours to over a day. The spider will typically lie on its back during the shed — this is completely normal. Remove any live prey from the enclosure immediately. Do not attempt to assist unless the spider has visibly been struggling for more than 24 hours, which is rare when humidity and hydration are properly maintained.

> ■ *Never dig up a sling that has sealed its burrow. It is almost certainly in premolt or freshly molted and highly vulnerable. Wait for it to reopen the entrance on its own.*

Post-Molt Care

After a molt the exoskeleton is soft and the spider is highly vulnerable. Do not offer food until the fangs have fully darkened to black — for spiderlings this takes 24–48 hours; for adults it may be up to a week or more. Keep fresh water accessible throughout. The spider may consume its old molt (exuvia) for minerals; this is normal and the molt does not need to be removed.

Health & Common Issues

Issue	Signs	Response
Dehydration	Shriveled, wrinkled abdomen	Provide water dish; dampen one substrate corner
Mold in enclosure	White or green fuzzy growth on substrate	Improve ventilation; remove affected substrate; reduce misting
Mite infestation	Tiny moving dots on spider or substrate	Full substrate replacement; clean enclosure thoroughly
Failed molt	Spider stuck in old exuvia	Raise humidity; seek experienced keeper advice if stuck ≥24 hrs
Food refusal	Consistent rejection of prey	Check for premolt signs; ensure prey is correctly sized; reduce frequ

This species is generally hardy within its preferred temperature and humidity ranges. The most common captive health issue is dehydration, easily prevented with a consistent water source and a lightly moist substrate corner. Regular substrate maintenance and water dish hygiene prevent the vast majority of mold and mite problems.

Breeding Notes

Hapalopus sp. ‘Colombia’ is one of the more accessible species for hobbyists interested in captive breeding. Females generally accept males with minimal aggression, though introductions should always be supervised and the male removed promptly after mating is confirmed. Males mature around one year of age; females reach breeding maturity at approximately two years.

Egg sacs typically contain 50–150 spiderlings. First instar slings emerge in roughly 6–8 weeks and molt to second instar within 3–4 weeks of emergence. Notably, Hapalopus sp. ‘Colombia’ spiderlings display full adult coloration from hatching — one of the most appealing traits of this species for breeders.

> *All breeding should use captive-bred specimens only. Wild-caught founders introduce legal and taxonomic complications and undermine the long-term sustainability of the species in the hobby.*

This guide was compiled using commonly accepted husbandry practices from experienced keepers and industry-standard tarantula care resources.

Cover image: No confirmed public-domain photograph was located at time of publication. Substitute your own photograph of this species before distribution.