

# Slugs

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Slugs can be a problem in the garden or flower bed. They can be hard to control and do not seem to be bothered by most garden insecticide (probably since they are not an insect they are a mollusk). The best control is to manage them in a multipronged approach. The first method is to modify the living conditions in your garden.

Since slugs produce copious amounts of mucous to get around and to ward off predators by trying to control the moisture level the success of managing them is greatly increased. The more sunlight and dry conditions that exist the less slugs you will have. So when watering do so as to not have a wet situation late in the evening when they typically come out. The presence of organic mulch also is conducive to the proliferation and friendly environment for slugs. By letting the top inch or so of the soil to dry out more frequently will reduce or eliminate slugs.

Try watering early in the morning or use drip irrigation so as to not have a wet soil condition late into the evening which would encourage slugs. One could use a light layer of coarse sand, not washed round sand, look for reject sand as the rough surfaces to not agree with the slimy mucus producing slugs as this causes them to dry out and perish. By having a more open canopy to let sunlight in will also help keep the humidity and moisture level down.

Another approach is to attract predators to your garden. Frogs, toads, firefly's larva are all good predators which will help control slugs and some other insects. Of course this would mean you would need habitat for these creatures which is a whole different conversation, however the typical small water feature placed close by the garden may suffice. However, this may attract snakes and some people may not find this acceptable. Although you would have less vole and mouse issues.



Then we come to the topic of top dressing the soil surface to discourage slugs. Small crushed up egg shells can work very well as the sharp surface is not agreeable with the soft undersides of the slugs and this also adds calcium to our soil (usually we do not need extra except for tomatoes). A small amount of wood or coal ash can be added periodically and discriminately to the top of the soil, the salts will dry

the slugs out. The two problems with this scenario is too much salt added to the soil is not good for plants and when you overhead water you wash these salts into the soil. Then there is the product called diatomaceous earth which acts like egg shells the rough surface is not good the slugs. Copper is a natural deterrent to slugs. So by placing copper strips around plants can be effective.

Now we can move to other means of controlling slugs. Trapping can interesting and also telling on how many slugs you have. One typical method is to place pieces of wood down in the garden and then every so often pick these up and the slugs will be attached under the wood. Also by placing shallow containers filled with beer or sugar with yeast will attract slugs and drown them. I am afraid my dogs would enjoy this more than the slugs.

The last resort is pesticides. There are many commercial products available. Most all of these are baits, and the newer chemical used is iron phosphate. These are safe products if used according to directions. At night one could use a 10% solution of ammonia applied directly on the slugs. Some new research by the department of agriculture has come out reveling that caffeine will cause slugs to cease feeding. So by adding some coffee grounds will not only help control the slugs but will add some organic material to our soils. I am looking forward to getting into the garden this year.

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