

Snail & Slug Control

Wildlife friendly control methods



**Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust**

Without a doubt, some slugs and snails wreak havoc in the garden, munching through plants, seedlings and vegetable crops. Do not despair, help is at hand. This factsheet provides details of several organic control methods that will not harm wildlife or your pets, unlike some slug pellets.

It's not all bad news. Whilst it may seem every slug and snail is out to get your treasured plants, many live exclusively on dead and rotting material and other soil invertebrates.

When studied closely, it is easy to identify the many different species. Of the 80,000 snails

known in the world, for example, only 20 are found in UK gardens and it's garden snails that cause most crop damage. They're not a fussy eater and can consume a large cabbage in 2 hours!

There are more than 30 species of slugs in the British Isles, most living on dead and rotting material.



Leopard slugs are a gardener's friend - they eat rotting plants and even other slugs!

Cabbage lovers

If you don't fancy wasting your beer (see below) there are alternatives: milk, grapefruit juice or cabbage soaked in washing up water. Sounds horrible but they love it!



Garden snails can be quite destructive

Eaten Alive

Parasitic nematode worms are an effective and safe biological control. They burrow into the mollusc and eat it from the inside. To ensure this works successfully, follow the instructions carefully and apply the nematodes every six weeks when the weather is quite warm (above 5°C) and the soil is moist.

By Hand

If you are squeamish don a pair of gloves, grab a bucket and head up the garden path at night with a torch. You will be surprised by how many slugs and snails you can find. Collect them up and dispose of them away from the garden (not over the fence).

For best results, use a combination of the suggested controls.



Slow-worms love slugs and hedgehogs will happily munch on both slugs and snails.



Drunk slugs...

Beer traps that really work!

Dig a hole near the plant you wish to protect, making it big enough for a margarine tub or something similar.

Then place the pot or tub in the hole, making sure the lip is 2cm above the soil surface. This will help prevent beneficial ground beetles falling in. Pour in the beer and wait for the slugs.

Natural Predators

One of the best ways to control slugs and snails in the garden is to encourage their natural predators. Slugs are eaten by rove beetles, ground beetles, slow-worms, frogs, hedgehogs and toads. Snails are eaten by song thrushes, mistle thrushes, blackbirds, the larvae of glow worms, hedgehogs, toads, mice and centipedes.

In fact, snails are the exclusive diet of glow worm larvae so without the snails we wouldn't be able to enjoy the fluorescent displays of the adults.

Song thrushes prefer large snails, which they crack open on anvils, but mistle thrushes and blackbirds have not mastered this trick. They therefore tend to eat smaller snails.

To encourage these natural predators in the garden, ensure there is a place for them to breed, shelter and hibernate. A pond is good for frogs and a log pile will encourage hedgehogs and slow-worms if they are about.

Plant Deterrents

Some plants are less vulnerable to attack than others. These include plants that are strongly aromatic, spiny, coloured red or have tough or hairy leaves. Vulnerable plants can be protected by a barrier of resistant plants. Ones to try include: onions, chives, lavender, sage, rosemary, thyme, saxifrage, ice plant, lamb's lettuce, most shrubs.

Recycled Plastic

To protect young plants from late frosts as well as snails and slugs, remove the cap from a plastic drinks bottle and cut off the bottom using a pair of scissors. Place over the top of your plant and remove during the day if desired.

Pot Plants

To protect pot plants, place a strip of self-adhesive copper tape round the rim of the pot. The copper naturally emits a small electric charge that deters both slugs and snails. Alternatively, stand the pot in a saucer of water. To stop the plant becoming water logged, raise the pot above the water by placing it on feet. Slugs, snails and vine weevils will not swim across.



Barricades

A ring of sharp grit, crushed egg shells, pine needles, coffee, ash or soot around a plant can help keep slugs and snails away. A mulch of cocoa shell is also worth a try. The mulch will also suppress weeds and help retain soil moisture.



Yucca Trouble

Repellents made from yucca extract are said to be a barrier that slugs and snails will not cross.

Don't water plants at night when slugs and snails are most active; water early in the morning.

