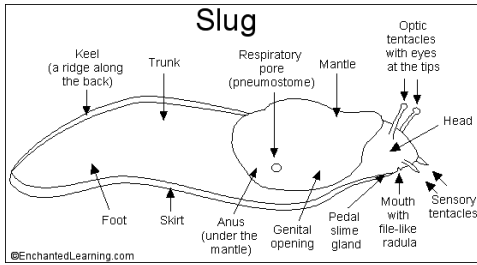


# SLUGS AND SNAILS

Best Practices



## IDENTIFICATION

Slugs and snails come in a variety of colors and sizes. Slugs are cigar shaped and sticky/slimy if touched. Snails are much like slugs with spiral shells. Both can severely damage plants. They like damp places and usually feed at night, preferring tender new growth and seedlings. Even though these pests are ground dwellers, they will climb plants and can cause damage well above the ground.

## DAMAGE

Both pests eat holes out of leaves creating a tattered appearance. They will crawl into the tightest of spaces to chew away at roots and succulent bulbs. Often the damage can go on for weeks before it is noticed. When temperatures warm in late winter eggs hatch and damage accelerates. They are particularly fond of hostas, lettuce, and other tender greens as well as low fruit like strawberries.

## SOLUTIONS – Best Practices

**Identify:** Confirming damage by slugs or snails can be difficult. However, you may see them during early morning or late evening, or you may see their glistening slime trails on hard surfaces. You can also find them by creating traps by laying boards or inverted saucers near affected plants. During the day turn over the traps and voila: SLUGS! The slime trail is usually the giveaway separating slug/snail damage from that of all other pests.

**Monitor/Establish Threshold:** Because of our damp, dim climate in Western Oregon slugs and snails are ever present. There will always be some damage. The question is how much is too much? As they prefer tender, new growth to older, tougher plants perhaps only some areas of your garden need attention.

**Prevention:** Numbers of slugs and snails can be reduced by cultivating the soil and removing weeds, debris, and decaying organic matter that provide breeding and/or hiding places. Shaded areas beneath decks or any other structure can be a slug “heaven.” Keeping shady areas weed and litter-free will reduce their populations.

**Control:** If your garden is small, remove slugs by hand. Hunting them by flashlight after sundown can be an entertaining activity, for you and your neighbors. You can trap slugs and snails by placing beer (any brand will do, they're not picky) in shallow pans or plastic food containers (such as yogurt or margarine tubs). Cut a few entrance holes around the rim, then fill halfway with beer, put the lid on top to keep out rain, and bury the trap so the entrances are at ground level. Place several containers throughout the garden near damaged plants. Beer is effective for about 3 days before it loses attractiveness to slugs and snails. If you get slug slime on your hands, wash it off using white vinegar and warm water. Encourage slug/snail predators such as beetles, chickens, and ducks. Diatomaceous earth, crushed egg shells, and copper tape can make effective barriers. If damage is severe bait can be extremely effective. Iron phosphate is the active ingredient in products like Sluggo. It is not attractive to wildlife, pets, or children and it breaks down into iron and phosphorous which enrich your soil. It is OMRI listed so is safe for organic gardening. Metaldehyde, available in many forms and brands (such as Deadline and Ortho) is highly effective but dangerous around pets, wildlife, and water sources. Regardless of method/product used ALWAYS read and follow package instructions.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Note: parts of this information were gathered from the OSU website:

<http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/19773/ec1586.pdf>

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7427.html>

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