



## Slugs & Snails

Slugs and snails are soft-bodied molluscs, snails having a hard shell. They are able to climb and are most active at night, often leaving a tell, tell silvery trail where they have been. Both creatures can cause damage to leaves, stems, buds, flowers and fruit.



### DAMAGE

Slugs and snails cause most damage to strawberry fruits, eating the flesh and making them susceptible to Grey Mould which can then spread by contact to sound fruits. Slugs also graze on newly planted strawberry runners, checking their growth or killing them.

The smaller snail species climb up into blackcurrant bushes to feed on the leaves and berries. Occasionally slugs feed on the new canes of raspberries and

hybrid berries, eating away large areas of the bark. This weakens the canes so that they break easily or become infected by various fungi.

### CONTROL

#### Non Chemical Control

Search for snails on damp evenings by torch light, removing them by hand from around your plants and disposing of them.

Thrushes, hedgehogs, toads and ground beetles will all feed on slugs and snails and therefore should be encouraged into the garden.

Catch slugs and snails by sinking jam jars part-filled with beer into the soil around strawberry beds, leaving the neck about one inch above soil level to avoid creatures, such as beetles, falling in and getting trapped. Check and empty regularly. Slug traps that contain an attractant are also available for use in the garden such as Agralan 'Slug Traps'

Copper based barriers such as copper tape holds a very mild electrical charge that deters slugs and snails from crossing it. There are also materials that have been coated with copper through which plants such as strawberries can be planted. Products available include the 'Slug and Snail Shocka' and Agralan's 'Slug Away Mats' to name but a few.

Snails hibernate over the winter under stones, flower pots, crevices in trees and many other sheltered places. Simply expose them to predators such as birds.

Slugs can also be controlled biologically with natural predators, using the nematode *Phasmarhabditis hermaphrodita* (Nemaslug Slug Killer). It can be used outdoors from March to October (temperatures should be above 5°C/41°F) and all year round under glass. Nemaslug may be less effective in heavy clay soils. Under suitable conditions the nematode can significantly reduce the number of slugs for at least six weeks. It is however less effective on snails. Natural predators are available from Green Gardener (Tel: 01603 715096).

### **Chemical Control**

On the strawberry bed they can be controlled by broadcasting slug pellets at the beginning of June before strawing down. If, later in the month, glistening slug trails are seen on the soil or on the plants, a second application at least seven days before the fruit is expected to ripen should be made.

In gardens where slugs and snails are known to be numerous, usually on heavy limestone or chalk soils (snails are less common on acid soils), slug pellets should be broadcasted under blackcurrant bushes at the grape stage of flower development. Preventative measures for cane fruits should only be taken when damage to the canes is seen to be occurring.

Slug pellets can harm children, pets and other wildlife if eaten in quantity, so consideration should be taken with regards to their use, opting for alternative measures in areas where children or animals are likely to go.

Pelleted Slug killers containing ferric phosphate and aluminium sulphate are becoming more easily available and are less toxic than traditional slug pellets which contain metaldehyde.

### **USE CHEMICALS SAFELY: ALWAYS READ THE LABEL**

When using chemicals it is most important to follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. Only use on the fruits that are listed on the manufacturer's label. An accurate weighing machine and measuring cylinder should be obtained. Chemicals can be wasted by making concentrations unnecessarily strong or by making them too weak and ineffective. Furthermore, if chemicals are too strong they may cause damage to the foliage.