

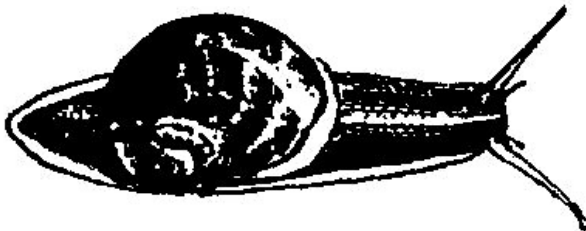
Slugs

The slug, a close relative of the snail, is an unsightly pest in many gardens and greenhouses. Slugs damage plants with their feeding, often completely destroying seedlings. As they move about, they leave an unsightly slime trail on plants and walks. If crushed on walks and driveways, slugs can present a hazard and often become an unsightly, malodorous mess.



Slug

Instead of a shell, slugs have a smooth mantle, which is the raised area above the front part of the body. The slugs common in Delaware may vary in length from 1/4 inch to 3 or more inches. The mouth parts are hard and work like a rasp. Eyes are on tentacles above the mouth parts.



Snail

stage.

All slugs need damp, humid conditions for development. During the day they hide out of sun and wind. They can burrow several inches into the soil under severely dry conditions. During their lifetime they produce fewer than 100 offspring. An individual slug is hermaphroditic (both sexes), but they normally find a mate and cross-fertilize. Most slugs overwinter in the egg

Control

Sanitation improves slug control. Remove all items slugs can to hide under during the day. In fact, use their hiding behavior to your advantage. A simple, effective trap for slugs is a group of boards six inches square or larger, placed around the garden or under greenhouse benches. Check the boards each morning and destroy slugs found there. Another nonchemical control method is to place 4-inch wide strips of fly screen on edge and partially embedded in the soil to keep slugs out of an area.

Tall, dense stands of plants provide attractive conditions for slugs. Keep areas where they become a control problem thinned out sufficiently to allow for sunlight, air movement and good

drying conditions. Natural predators of the slug include several species of ground beetle and fireflies, or lightening bugs.

Toads are their most important natural enemy. Slugs will avoid crawling over anything dry, dusty or scratchy, such as lime, road dust, cinders, gravel or sand. The excessive secretion of mucus needed to free themselves from these materials soon exhausts them and they die. A border of any one of these inert materials will prove helpful in control. Other materials reported as helpful are 7 percent copper dust, hydrated lime and urea.

Metaldehyde has worked well as a slug control chemical. Commercial preparations containing metaldehyde are available at farm stores and at many garden centers and hardware stores. It is sold as a liquid and as pellets. All formulations are effective, but they must be applied every two days until the slugs are gone.

There is also a material called methiocarb (Mesurol) which has a federal registration for use in flower gardens around the home and in ornamental greenhouses. It is sold as a two percent pelleted bait. Apply the bait to soil around plants but not directly to plant foliage. It is not for use on plants grown for food. The rate of application is 1 pound per 1,000 square feet of area. Always read the label before using any pesticide for specific directions and precautions. Dogs may be attracted to the Mesurol bait, so be careful to keep them away from treated areas.

Pesticides mentioned in this publication are generally listed as the active ingredient or common chemical name. The active ingredient is the chemical in the formulation that is active against the pest. Read the pesticide label to determine if the correct active ingredient is present. Regardless of the product you choose, be sure the plant and/or the pest you want to control is on the label.

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