

12 Organic Ways to Keep Your Garden Free of Slugs

Slugs are classified as gastropods, which makes them a little different from the usual suspects in a garden. They thrive in places of high moisture because they're mostly made of water, and they need to produce large amounts of protective mucus to stay alive.

They love everything a garden has to offer. They eat several kinds of plants, and slug populations have been known to wipe out entire gardens. Their slime trails can contaminate produce and their eating habits leave gaping holes in plants. Slugs can be difficult to diagnose because they're not active during the day, but slime trails and patchy leaves are a sure sign that you have slugs in your garden. The bad news for gardeners is that slugs are hermaphrodites and each one of them is capable of laying eggs.

While slugs can be destructive, there are several things a gardener can do to prevent infestations and get rid of them.

Garden Slug Prevention

For those with raised garden beds, seal up and cracks and crevices to restrict the slug access points to your garden. Any unplanted seedlings should be elevated since slugs love these and they're easy targets on the ground.

Dry out any damp areas in the garden or any unused wood. Anything that a slug can hide under it will use to hide. Slugs like the cool, damp earth and the protection from the sun. "Spring cleaning" your garden and de-clutter.

Lastly, plants some "barrier plants". These are plants that will repel slugs because slugs don't like their smell. These

include onions, chives, garlic, thyme, cilantro, Italian parsley, rosemary, and fennel. With these in the garden, you may never have a problem with slugs.

Getting Rid of Garden Slugs

Water in the Morning

Ridding your garden of slugs can be as easy as adjusting a few gardening habits. When you water in the morning, the water has time to seep into the soil and the sun will help dry the soil out again. This reduces the moisture in your garden, making it less attractive to slugs.

Let the Chickens Help

If you keep poultry, you can let them loose in the garden. Ducks and chickens will enjoy a little treat. But don't leave them in the garden unsupervised or they may damage your plants after they eat the slugs.

Slug Beer Traps

For some reason, slugs are attracted to the yeast in beer. Get a deep dish container. Plastic cups and yogurt containers work well. Bury the container in your garden so that the rim is parallel with the dirt around it and fill it to the halfway point with beer. Refill it every other day, and check it daily to make sure no other creatures have managed to fall in. A yeast, honey, and water mixture can be used instead of beer. The proportions aren't too important. Slugs fall in and drown.

Slugs Hate Coffee Grounds

Coffee grounds repel slugs. Create a barrier around the plant's base. You can also make a spray to use on the soil and

plants. If you're not a coffee drinker, your local coffee shop will probably give you grounds for free.

Iron Phosphate Slug Bait

Many gardeners use this to keep slugs out of the garden because iron phosphate is a compound already found naturally in soil. Most slug baits (like Sluggo) are found in pellet form and should be sprinkled throughout the garden after it has been watered. When a slug happens on a pellet, it eats the bait causing it to stop metabolizing calcium. Slugs stop eating after this happens and they die three to six days later. Even though it takes the slugs some time to die, they will stop destroying plants even before then.

Grapefruit Rinds Attract Slugs

Cut a grapefruit in half and scoop out the fruit leaving behind two rinds. Take them into the garden and keep them inverted. These rinds attract slugs and trick them into thinking they've found a sanctuary. Toss out the slugs and rinds regularly and place fresh ones in their place. You can also use overturned flower pots. This method is best done used with other techniques.

Protect Your Garden From Slugs with Egg Shells

Ground eggshells prove to be an uncomfortable surface for slugs to crawl over. You can surround your plants with eggshells as a deterrent. This method doesn't kill slugs and is best used with other techniques that will.

Remove Slugs by Hand

If the idea of picking up slugs makes you squeamish, grab a pair of tweezers. The best time to do this is in the evening when the slugs start to come out. If needed, bring a

flashlight to help you see. After you've picked them, drop them in a bucket of soapy or salty water. Be careful not to pour any salt on your soil because it will ruin it.

Slugs Cannot Handle Sand

This is a cheap method that works like the broken egg shells: the rough surface is something slugs don't like climbing over. Sand works whether it's wet or dry and is easily replaced. Pour a thick barrier around each plant but take care not to mix it into the soil.

Cornmeal Slug Traps

Similar to the beer trap, this a great alternative if you don't want to part with your beer. In a plastic cup, put in one or two tablespoons of cornmeal and then bury it in the soil where the slugs are most active. There are two theories about why this works. 1. The cornmeal is too jagged for them or 2. The slugs eat too much, causing them to dry out.

Diatomaceous Earth Slug Barrier

Hard to pronounce and harder to spell, diatomaceous earth is made up of fossilized diatoms that have accumulated at the bottom of old lake beds. It comes in two different grades: pool grade and food grade. In the garden (and in any other capacity) you need to use food grade. Once you have some diatomaceous earth, you can simply do a barrier around each plant. Diatomaceous earth it will dehydrate any slug that comes into contact with it.

Copper Strips Repel Slugs

The theory behind why this method works is when a slug crawls over the strip it gives them a bit of an electric shock. It doesn't actively kill slugs, but it does repel them. Cut two inch strips and make a fence around the plant. Keep all

vegetation inside of the wire to prevent slugs from crawling over the strip. Some companies sell a metallic mesh that can be used around each plant.

Besides these methods, there are a number of other ways gardeners have gone green. With so much information on hand, there is no reason to use chemical pesticides when they are so many efficient, organic methods to choose from. Combine these techniques to help achieve a slug-free garden without compromising your garden's organic integrity.

Recommended Products:

- Diatomaceous Earth