

# General Gardening: What's the best way to get rid of slugs?

When it comes to battling slugs, there isn't just one "best" way to eradicate these prolific and voracious garden pests that are so prevalent here in the moist Northwest. That's why successful gardeners usually use a combination of methods to keep these slimy, unwelcome intruders under control. Slugs can live from one to six years, have both female and male reproductive organs, and can lay 500 eggs per year, so it's critical not to let them get out of control!

Try a variety of these methods to reduce the slug population in your garden:

- **Get rid of places where slugs like to hide** including: piles of leaves, plant debris, groundcovers, tall grass and weeds, shrubs with low branches, rock piles, stacked wood, mulches made of large wood chips, and a very common slug hiding spot – boards laying flat on the ground.
- **Do grow plants that slugs *dislike* – Don't grow plants that slugs *like*.** Slugs have discriminating tastes and won't eat just anything. Check out these [lists of plants that slugs pass up and the plants that are slug favorites](#).
- **Watch your watering.** Slugs need moisture to survive, so don't provide a damp environment for them. Don't overwater, and don't water late in the day or early evening.
- **Cultivate your soil regularly and rake your garden** in early spring to destroy slug eggs before they hatch.
- **Use slug bait.**
  - **What** – **Iron phosphate** and metaldehyde are the two chemicals found in most slug baits. The much less toxic iron phosphate has been found to be as effective as the metaldehyde, which can be fatal to pets and wild birds.
  - **When** – Use bait when slugs are more active, which is usually in the moist and mild **spring and fall** seasons. It's effective to bait at planting time or **just before the seedlings sprout** when the slug bait is the only food on the soil surface. Apply the bait in the **late afternoon or evening, after rain showers**, or after watering, as slugs like to come out and feed when it's moist.
  - **Where** – Sprinkle bait in **moist and protected locations** such as around sprinklers or close to walls and fences, or scatter it along areas where slugs cross to get from sheltered areas to your garden.
  - **How** – Always **follow the directions** on the package! [Find instructions here on how to make simple slug traps](#) that will also keep the slug bait dry (or regarding beer, keep it undiluted).
- **Hand pick the slugs** and drop them in a bucket of soapy water. Don't sprinkle them with salt as this will increase your soil salinity.

## How to make a slug hunt easier:

- **Grow plants that slugs love**, so the slugs will be attracted to those plants instead of your favorites and you'll know where to find them!
- **Lay boards or plywood down** to create a cool, moist environment for them to hide.
- **Grab a flashlight** and search for slugs at night when they're more active.
- **Consider paying children to catch them** for you.
- **Lastly, after the hunt, wipe the slug slime off your hands *first*** before washing. Slug mucus actually *absorbs* water, which is why it's so very hard to wash off.

# General Gardening: What's the best way to get rid of slugs?

- **Garden in raised beds surrounded by a strip of copper.** The slime that slugs secrete allows them to crawl unharmed over coffee grounds, gravel, crushed eggshells, and even a razor blade, but they get a mild electrical shock if they try to cross a copper strip.
- **Encourage natural predators** such as garter snakes, birds, frogs and ground beetles to dine on your slugs. Or **let chickens, ducks, or geese gobble up your slugs**, keeping in mind that along with the slugs, they also may gobble up much of your garden!

Unique solution ID: #1017

Author: Donna Reynolds

Last update: 2011-11-29 00:07