

The following are suggestions for minimizing slug damage to either vegetable or flower gardens:

1. Spade or rototill the garden area in the fall.
2. Spade or rototill the garden again around April 1.
3. Maintain a system of clean cultivation of hoeing so that the surface of the soil is dry and crumbly. This is a very important factor in reducing slug damage.
4. Where heavy infestation of slugs causes serious damage, hand-picking will reduce slug populations. Use a flashlight to check infestation. About 10 p.m., inspect garden for active slugs. Those detected can be picked up with an old teaspoon. Place captured slugs in a container of salt which will kill them. If this activity is continued for 3 or 4 nights in a row, damage can be greatly reduced.
5. It is advisable to have your garden soil tested at the WVU Soil Testing Lab (call County Agent for information). In order to increase organic material in the soil, it is best to compost materials such as grass clippings, leaves and other plant debris (see "composting" leaflet available from WVU Soil Testing Lab). At the time of use the compost should be black and crumbly, then spread over the garden and spaded into the soil.
6. Gardeners have reported some success with beer placed in small cups or pans sunk in the soil so the lip of the container is slightly below the level of the ground. Slugs are attracted to the containers; once inside they drown. The beer needs to be replaced about every three days for best results; however, stale beer may be used. Slug populations can be greatly reduced if this method is started early in the spring and enough of the containers are set out.
7. Natural predators are toads, firefly larvae and several ground beetles. Slug baits called Metaldehyde ("Bug-Geta") and Mesurol ("Slug-Geta"), are available and effective against this pest if applied exactly as directed on the label. Metaldehyde is available as a 4% paste or in liquid or pellet form. None of these commercial baits are to be used directly on food crops. Apply only to the soil surface around plants, not on foliage or edible plant parts. Treat every two weeks after slugs are first seen, or follow label instruction. Dogs may be attracted to Mesurol bait so keep them away from treated areas.

The above information is not intended to be conclusive or selective, nor does it imply liability for improper chemical treatment. Chemical usage should follow label instructions and may require professional certification.

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