



## A New Perspective on Slugs

Gardening enthusiasts are well acquainted with the havoc that slugs can wreak on their cherished plants. However, a noteworthy shift in perspective comes from The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), the foremost garden charity in Britain, which no longer classifies these creatures as pests. Instead, the RHS highlights the crucial role that slugs play in fostering a diverse and healthy ecosystem.

Within the garden, slugs function as vital contributors to the decomposition of plant matter, serving as a part of the intricate soil food web. Additionally, they play a significant role as a food source for various wildlife, including birds and frogs. Eliminating these organisms could disrupt the delicate balance of your local ecosystem, potentially harming the overall health of your garden. Rather than engaging in a battle against these plant-munching invertebrates, the RHS advocates for peaceful coexistence in our gardens.

Here are some practical tips to consider:

- **Protect Your Plants:** Safeguard vulnerable plants with cloches, especially those with young, tender leaves or succulent foliage.
- **Remove Habitat:** Clear away debris, rocks, weeds, leaves, logs, or other organic matter that provides hiding spots for slugs.
- **Check Your Irrigation:** Slugs thrive in wet conditions, so adjust your irrigation practices. Less frequent watering and switching to drip irrigation reduce humidity, creating a less favorable habitat for these pests. Watering near sunrise minimizes the duration of moist conditions.
- **Humane Hand-Picking:** Instead of resorting to snail bait or beer traps, hand-pick slugs during their most active periods at night. Deposit them in your compost pile, where they can feast on your unwanted plant matter.
- **Attract Birds:** Support natural pest control by attracting birds through feeders, particularly during spring when the young ones can feast on slugs. Rake over soil and fallen leaves to expose slug eggs for birds to consume.
- **Plant Strategically:** Arrange your garden strategically by placing plants attractive to slugs next to prized ones. Alternatively, opt for varieties that these pests find unappealing, such as plants with highly scented foliage.

Some plants slugs will seriously damage include basil, beans, cabbage, dahlia, delphinium, hosta, lettuce, marigolds, strawberries, and many other vegetable plants.

Choose plants that are not attractive to slugs for areas where they are dense. Examples are plants with highly scented foliage, such as lavender, rosemary, and sage and some commonly grown plants including ferns, cyclamen, hydrangea, California poppy, nasturtium, and lantana.

Always consider implementing these cultural control methods as a first line of defense against slug populations before turning to chemical solutions, if necessary. In light of all that we are learning about

climate change and habitat loss, cultivating a diverse array of flora and fauna in our gardens becomes increasingly crucial to supporting local ecosystems.

To read more, visit:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/04/planet-friendly-rhs-to-no-longer-class-slugs-and-snails-as-pests>
- <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7427.html>
- <https://homeguides.sfgate.com/slugs-strawberry-plants-33105.html>
- <https://www2.ipm.ucanr.edu/agriculture/strawberry/Slugs/>