



# Snails & Slugs

**Snails and slugs rank among our most despised garden pests.** These slimy mollusks emerge from hiding at night and chew holes in leaves and flowers of many succulent garden plants and fruit. Slugs and snails are similar in structure and biology, except slugs lack the snails' external spiral shell. Management requires a vigilant and integrated approach that includes eliminating moisture and hiding spots, trapping, barriers, and handpicking. Baits can be helpful, but by themselves, don't provide adequate control in gardens that contain plenty of shelter, food, and moisture.

## How do you know snails and slugs are causing damage?

- You may not observe these pests at first because they feed at night and hide during the day. Go out at night or early morning to view them in action.
- Other pests can cause holes in leaves, flowers, and fruit. Look for the shiny, slimy trails slugs and snails leave behind.

## What must be done to reduce snails and slugs?

- Remove daytime hiding places — ivy, weedy areas, debris, or boards.
- Regularly remove snails from shelters you cannot eliminate such as low ledges on fences, undersides of decks, meter boxes.
- Place traps in your garden and dispose of trapped snails and slugs daily.
- Reduce moist surfaces by switching to drip irrigation or sprinkling in the morning rather than later in the day.
- Consider snail-proof plants such as impatiens, geraniums, begonias, lantana, nasturtiums, and many plants with stiff leaves and highly scented foliage like sage, rosemary, and lavender.

## How can I manage snails and slugs without using pesticides?

- Make sure the garden is mollusk-free before planting. Then erect a copper barrier around it. Use a 4- to 6-inch-wide band of copper, buried an inch below the soil and bent over at the top or attach it around the edge of a raised bed.
- Place your garden in the sunniest spot possible. Remove garden objects or adjacent plants or ground cover that may serve as shady shelter. Reduce moist surfaces as much as possible.
- Build a trap using a 12"x15" board raised off the ground by 1-inch runners. As the mollusks collect under the board, scrape them off and destroy them daily.

## What about baits?

- Baits will not be very effective unless you also remove shelter, food, and moisture.
- Metaldehyde baits are especially poisonous to dogs and birds. Metaldehyde also loses its effectiveness rapidly in sunlight and after rain or irrigation.
- Iron phosphate baits are safe for use around dogs, children, and wildlife.
- Irrigate before applying bait and apply in evening on warm days when mollusks are active.
- Scatter bait around sprinklers and in moist and protected areas where snails and slugs travel.



Use **NON-CHEMICAL** methods & **LEAST TOXIC** pesticides. **WHY?** Runoff from around your home and garden carries water containing pesticides that pollute our streams, rivers, lakes and oceans.

Learn more about San Diego regional water quality at: [www.ThinkBlueSD.org](http://www.ThinkBlueSD.org) & [www.ProjectCleanWater.org](http://www.ProjectCleanWater.org).

For more pest information visit the University of California IPM website at: [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu) or the UCCE Master Gardeners at: (858) 694-2860, Mon - Fri, 9 am to 3 pm



University of California  
Cooperative Extension



It's the water that connects us!