

Bad Bug: Slugs

Description

Slugs are members of the mollusk family and are shades of brown, black and grey. They excrete a slimy coating to protect themselves and to make traveling easier, leaving a trail of slime. They feed mostly at night but also on overcast or rainy days; often found under debris during warmer, drier periods.

Life Cycle

Adults lay eggs in moist soil or under rocks. Eggs hatch in 2-4 weeks and young grow 5 months to 2 years before reaching maturity. Slugs are hermaphroditic, meaning each one has both male and female reproductive organs and can lay hundreds of eggs a year. They go dormant in dry or cold weather.

Plants They Attack

They love young seedlings, many mature perennials and annuals and tender vegetables like lettuce and ripening strawberries, tomatoes and peppers. They won't eat plants with strongly fragranced foliage or fuzzy leaves, including lamb's ears, lavender, salvias, and most herbs.

Spot the Damage

Slugs can do significant damage to seedlings and other tender growth, devouring entire seedlings overnight. They are most damaging in wet years or regions. Look for irregular holes in leaves, along the margin or in the center. If no slugs are visible, look for their dried slime trails or visit the area at night with a flashlight.

Preventative Actions

Clear your garden of debris. Slugs hide in and eat decaying plant matter. Keep mulch away from base of plants.

Water only in morning hours, allowing foliage to dry before nightfall.

Hand-pick slugs and place in a container of soapy, salty water. You'll find more if you search for them at night with a flashlight.

Capture slugs by placing shallow saucers of beer in your garden where they will drown. Add salt to beer solution.

Attract frogs and toads and lizards to your garden by placing small rock piles and/or dishes of water near to the garden.

Attract birds to your garden by providing places for them to perch.

Protect seedlings by laying small, flat circles of window screening around their base. Slugs detest rough surfaces. You can also use wood ashes or pine needles.

Control weeds and grow your crops away from moist, shaded habitats.

Sources quoted:

- 'Good Bug Bad Bug' Walliser, 2008
- 'The Organic Gardener's Handbook,' Ellis and Bradley, 1996
- Cedar Circle Farm: <https://cedarcirclefarm.org/tips/category/pests>



Adult Slugs and Damage

photo: www.getridofslugs.com



Slug Damage

photo: www.thegardenerseden.com



Adult Leopard Slug

photo: [wikicommons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leopard_slug)



Homemade Toad Hut