

Healthy Choices to Control Lawn and Garden Pests

SLUGS

What Do They Look Like?

There are at least two kinds of larger, non-native slugs found in gardens in the Capital Regional District:

Black slug (also called chocolate or licorice slug)

- This slug may grow up to 18 cm long, and can be black, brown, red-brown, green-brown or yellow- orange in colour, with red, orange, yellow or black foot fringe
- When disturbed, it may sway from side to side and contract into a bell-shaped form

Scarlet-backed tailedropper

- This medium-sized slug may grow up to 6 cm long, and has black bands on its mantle (behind the head), tail and body, with orangish pigment

There is only one type of large slug native to our area:

Banana slug

- As its name suggests, this slug may be varying shades of yellow or yellow with black speckles. It may grow up to 15 cm long. Banana slugs prefer moist woodland habitats and are less common in city gardens
- Banana slugs are native to BC and tend to do little damage compared to the non-native slugs. If you find one, gently move it out of your garden

Where Do I Find Them?

- Slugs feed on rotting plant materials as well as on young plants. They especially love young vegetables, lilies and spring bulbs
- They feed at night and during wet, cloudy days
- Slugs can be found under low-lying plants, trees, shrubs, decaying leaves and boards in dark, moist places



- Slugs love soils rich in calcium and high in organic matter — the same soils that are perfect for growing vegetables!
- Most slugs leave a slimy, silvery trail of mucous behind them

Slug Life Cycle

- Slugs are mollusks, the same animal group as snails, clams and mussels
- They generally mate between July and October and lay their eggs in moist places, such as under stones, boards or decaying plant material
- The pearly white eggs are found in clumps of 40 to 100
- Baby slugs, sometimes no bigger than a pencil eraser, can eat 30 to 40 times their weight in one day!
- Slugs live from 1 to 2 years

What Does The Damage Look Like?

- Slugs chew holes in plant leaves and eat young shoots and seedlings

Are Slugs Really A Problem?

- Slugs can multiply quickly and are sometimes difficult to get rid of once they have established themselves in a garden
- Holes chewed in leaves cause damage to young plants and seedlings
- Plant extra seeds or seedlings to offset damage caused by slugs

What Can I Do? Non-Pesticide Treatments

- Reduce slug habitat by removing unwanted bricks, boards and garden clippings from around your yard
- Ivy is a favourite hiding place for slugs. Clip back ivy and other vegetation to improve air flow and sunlight to make your garden drier, warmer and less attractive to slugs
- Collect slugs by hand when they are actively feeding at dawn or dusk and destroy them. A damp plastic bag spread out in your garden may make a handy slug-picking site!
- Slugs love beer. Make your own slug traps by filling old yogurt containers with beer or a water and yeast mixture, and sticking them in the ground. The edges of the containers should stick up above the ground at least 1 cm to prevent trapping other beneficial creatures
- Barriers are effective in preventing slugs from getting at certain areas of your garden or specific plants or trees. Copper or zinc strips are available at garden centres or hardware stores, and make excellent barriers. Place the strips around flowerbeds, shrubs or trees. Other, less expensive barriers include sawdust, crushed eggshells, ground oyster shells, soap, cinders, lime or diatomaceous earth
- Birds, snakes, frogs and certain types of beetles eat slugs. Protect and attract these creatures to your yard for natural slug control!

How Can I Prevent It Next Year?

- Reduce slug habitat by removing unwanted bricks, boards and garden clippings from around your yard
- Check under pot rims and under plant containers for slugs before bringing them into your garden
- In the fall, look for and destroy the pearly egg masses of slugs under mulch, decaying wood, rocks or in the soil

Tips For A Healthy Garden

- Ensure soil is healthy, well conditioned with organic compost and has adequate drainage (remember that plants get most of their nutrients from the soil)
- Plan your garden so plants are put in areas where they naturally thrive (dry or wet, sun or shade)
- Plant in raised beds (good for the plants, good for the back!)
- Use native plants that are already acclimatized, require low maintenance and have an in-bred resistance to local pests and diseases
- Water deeply but infrequently to maintain a strong root structure
- Protect and attract native beneficial species (give them a place to live and a source of water and they'll do the rest)
- Practise annual crop rotation for each type of vegetable (keeps patterns of disease or insect invasion in check)
- Fertilize regularly in spring and fall with organic compost

