

Bugs and Blights, Sharon J. Collman, WSU Snohomish County Extension

Slug and Snail Primer: Slugs and snails at their worst account for considerable plant losses and at the least are just plain annoying to people. People don't like them. So here are some slug and snail facts to consider when developing your mollusk management program.

There will be eggs: hidden in crevices, up the drainage hole of pots, under pots and stones or boards. October is a bit late to control slugs and snails before they lay eggs. You can make your plans now to get ahead of spring egg laying, and one less slug now is one less this winter. If you see one slug chasing another or two nestled together pairs, they are playing the mating game and you may still have time. Slugs and snails are both male and female and both can lay eggs,



Water relations: Slugs can't control water leaving their body or coming into their body. Hence, you may see slugs literally climbing the walls in a rainstorm and bloated slugs that fell into a ponds or beer traps. For this reason, they also select drained but moist placed like up the drainage holes of, or between pots, under boards or rocks, or in debris. Snails can't but...

Snails can create a gluey covering across their opening and stick themselves to walls, foliage, pots, or pallets. Sealed off they can go many months during dry spells and emerge with the first drop of rain or irrigation water. (Mine went 6 months forgotten and revived instantly – just add water. Slugs don't do so well in dry times but snails thrive.



Tree Slugs of Mystery™

Mr./Ms. Stretchy: Slugs can stretch eleven times their body width so expect escapees through that tiny hole in your paper coffee lid and watch for them in cracks and tight places.

Slugs can solve problems. When placed in a closed box with food surrounded by a moat, the crawled up the sides, across the top and dropped down a slime rope to the food.

Lick of death: With only teeth on their tongue, (radula) slugs and snails can only lick the plant to death. Slug damage often leaves bits and pieces or thin areas leaves; snail damage seems to be less tattered. They can strip the stems of perennials and little trees.



Calcium for life: Snails require calcium to build and repair their shell. With a lack of calcium, shells are thin and provide less protection. Slugs are free of such limits.

Baits can work well but read the label. Some work by paralyzing the slug that then slowly desiccates in the sun. If it doesn't die outright, it may recover; and with that near-death experience in its tiny little mind, it has learned to avoid that bait forever. Gather thee mollusks whilst you may.