

Decreasing the slug population

Slugs have been a problem for many gardeners this summer. Perhaps our wet spring and early summer rains can be blamed. Whatever the cause, slugs are pests and can destroy vegetables and flowers in short order.

Slugs aren't insects, but are a separate "tribe" called Mollusca, since they have soft bodies and are legless. As are snails, slugs, unlike some creatures, live for several years and spend their winters in the soil or in garden trash. This is another reason to clean the beds well when the growing season is over.

"How do I get rid of slugs?" is often asked. Since they feed at night, it is difficult to catch them in their destruction. In early evening, or at night (using a flashlight), they can be hand picked, but that chore isn't for the squeamish. If objects such as rocks or boards are placed in the garden, they can collect there and be easily "done in." Other methods can be tried — perseverance is the key.

I'M SURE you've heard of putting beer in a shallow container. Now research by Colorado State University entomologist Whitney Cranshaw has

shown that slugs prefer either Anheuser-Busch products or (their favorite) "near beer" Kingsbury Malt Beverage.

Malt sugar in water is more effective than table sugar. This information is from Harrowarth magazine. You might try 1 c. water, 1 tsp. sugar and ¼ tsp. baking yeast in a container.

Or, fill the cavity of a half-shell of a cantaloupe with very soapy water and sink it in the ground. Parina Dog Chow Nuggets seem to be sought after by slugs.

Crushed shells, egg shells, coal cinders, broken concrete, marble dust, cedar or oak bark or builder's sand (if the soil pH is low, add a little wood ash to this) will act as a physical barrier. Diatomaceous Earth (little sea critters that have been ground up) is expensive, but like the other products mentioned, will also deter slugs.

Another suggestion is wormwood tea. Thin strips of copper sheeting or foil have been tested. When slugs or snails crawl over this, a mild shock (generated by electrogalvanic ac-

down to earth

Marty Figley

tion) kills them.

I'm interested to know if any of these methods work for you.

NOW TO a more pleasant topic. When we planted the shrub rose garden, we used WeedBlock™ Landscape Fabric to "bar" control the weeds in the newly planted area (several landscape fabrics are on the market). I found that the fabric,

made by Easy Gardner TM of Waco, Texas, didn't travel when cut and was very easy to handle. It would be especially suitable in other landscaping areas around evergreens and trees that don't require cultivating. Many garden stores in this area carry the product.

A drip irrigation system in the new rose bed is working splendidly.

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