



Spotlight on Pests: Slugs

You've selected your crops, prepped your garden space, and carefully planted your seedlings and seeds. Now comes the real work – tending your crops and keeping pests at bay until you can harvest your hard-won produce!

There are many different types of pests that can damage garden plants – from insects to wild animals to the neighbor (or your own!) dog or cat. Over the growing season, we'll address some of the most common garden pests, and give you some ideas for sheltering your plants from damage.

The best insurance against insect pests is to create a healthy environment for your crops. But sometimes even the healthiest garden can draw pests, especially during a growing season like this one, where the mild winter allowed many insects to survive.

This year, slugs have been pestering our plants on our production sites and in community gardens. These slow-moving, gooey creatures eat ragged holes in plants, particularly on the lower leaves. They'll eat almost any plant, but the damage is most discouraging on the crops whose leaves *we* were hoping to eat: lettuce, arugula, spinach, chard, kale, and cabbage. Slugs love damp conditions, so they are drawn to beds that have been mulched. They can do an impressive amount of damage, often at night, in the early morning, or evening. If you look closely around the edges of the holes, you can often see the shimmery trail the slugs left behind.

Best practices for getting rid of slugs include:

- Pull mulch away from the stems of plants, to create a dry area that will discourage slugs.
- Water in the morning, so the ground is dry by evening.
- Attract slug-eating toads, by creating good [toad habitat](#).
- Set out shallow dishes of beer in the garden. Slugs love the yeast and will crawl into the dish, to their (happy?) demise. Be sure to check & empty the dishes regularly – they can start to smell!
- Copper repels slugs. Copper tape and strips are available from many gardening stores.
- For a severe slug problem, try Sluggo – a granular commercial product that we use on our production sites. It is approved for organic production, and is made of iron phosphate.

Here are some photos of slugs we've seen on our production sites over the past few weeks:

