

Extension Tip of the Week

If you haven't seen a slug in your garden or flower bed, it's possible you will be seeing them with the wet weather we have been experiencing. Slugs are close relatives of snails, in fact they look very similar except that slugs don't have the external shell.

Slugs require a damp environment to survive, and that we've had! They hide during the day in soil crevices, under boards and rocks and in dense or low foliage. At night they feed on bedding plants and large leafed ornamentals such as hostas. Slugs feed on tender plant parts by rasping large, irregular holes. The silvery slime trails they leave as they travel distinguish them from other leaf-feeding pests. By minimizing heavy leaf litter, boards, bricks and other piles of damp debris you are eliminating a home for slugs. Dense ground covers that are harboring slugs can be thinned to promote air circulation, sunshine and drying.

Beer is a well-known trap attractant for slugs, though any fermenting or yeast-containing liquid appears to work. The traditional trap design is to bury a shallow pan in the soil with the top edge level with the soil surface. Renew the beer or attractant regularly and empty the pan of trapped slugs frequently. Chemical controls are available and typically contain metaldehyde in a liquid, granular or pelleted form. Be sure to read and follow label directions.

Source: ISU Horticulture & Home Pest Management at <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/>