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Strawberry: Slugs

Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for successful plant problem management.

Biology

Slugs are common garden pests in western Washington. They resemble snails, but lack shells. They may vary from as little as 1/4" up to several inches in length, depending on age and species. Slugs typically feed on strawberry fruit, making deep holes in ripening berries. The damage commonly occurs under the cap. Slugs may also feed on the leaves. They leave behind a characteristic slime trail, which appears silvery when it dries. Slugs typically feed at night and do more damage during cool, moist weather.

Management Options

Non-Chemical Management

- ~ Encourage predators such as birds, garter snakes, frogs, ducks, and predacious ground beetles. Avoid use of broad-spectrum insecticides which kill beneficial insects.
- ~ Hand-pick and kill slugs when noticed.
- ~ Clean up weeds and debris which may provide shelter. Cut tall weeds and grasses around the garden and clean up rocks, boards, and other shelters.
- ~ Trap slugs with cans of stale beer sunk into the ground.
- ~ Use chemical baits with caution, as pets can be poisoned. Iron phosphate-based baits are safer for pets!

Select non-chemical management options as your first choice!

Chemical Management

IMPORTANT: Visit Home and Garden Fact Sheets for more information on using pesticides

Apply bait in evening or at night as these pests feed mainly at night. When using metaldehyde products, choose products with metaldehyde as the only active ingredient (other ingredients can be harmful to beneficial insects)! Be careful not to expose metaldehyde baits to pets or other animals, since they are extremely toxic.

Listed below are examples of pesticides that are legal in Washington. Always read and follow all label directions.

- ~ Escar-Go! Slug & Snail Bait
 - active ingredient: iron phosphate
 - EPA reg no: 67702-3-56872
- ~ Lilly Miller Slug & Snail Bait
 - active ingredient: metaldehyde
 - EPA reg no: 8119-11-33116
- ~ Monterey Sluggo [Organic]
 - active ingredient: iron phosphate
 - EPA reg no: 67702-3-54705
- ~ This list may not include all products registered for this use.

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Images



*~ Caption: Slug damage and slime
~ Photo by: R.S. Byther*