

Slugs & Snails

There is nothing more frustrating than waiting 2 or 3 years for a new plant to bloom, and then discovering that the long awaited buds have been destroyed by marauding molluscs.



These unwelcome visitors can appear seemingly 'out of nowhere'. In many cases they have arrived hidden in the pot of a plant previously grown elsewhere, and in other cases they have literally come out of the ground (either in a greenhouse, or while plants were outside for the summer).

The first line of defense should be minimizing the risk of letting them in. Growing indoors, this means repotting every plant purchased **immediately** upon receipt:

- Discard all the original potting mix. Not just into a garbage can (slugs can crawl out); it needs to go outside into the garbage.
- Rinse the roots by swishing in a bucket of water.
- Repot in a fresh pot.

I prefer using new pots; if you are forced to use an old pot again, make sure to sterilize it first to eliminate the possibility of spreading virus.

If you have a fairly large collection, and are uncertain whether you might have some of these unwanted visitors, there are a couple of steps you can take before resorting to repotting everything simultaneously:

A. Slugs are attracted to beer.

Place a couple of shallow dishes with fresh beer in your growing area. Some slugs will drown themselves in the beer, but you should also go inspect the area a couple of hours after dark. Any unwanted molluscs will probably be on their way, and you can collect them then.

B. Use slug bait.

There are several products on the market. The brand most readily available is **Corry's**, which is based on iron chelate. It works, but it becomes less effective if used repeatedly. It is suggested that you alternate applications with a product with a different base.

NOTE: **Corry's** is not available in New York, but it can be sold in New Jersey.

Scatter the granules directly into the pots. You do not need to place it in every pot.

When you bring plants outdoors for the summer, the risk of infection is increased. One simple way to minimize the risk, is to wrap copper tape around the legs of the table or bench you are using for your plants. Slugs & snails will not cross copper, so that will prevent the buggers from coming up from below (as long as you trim any weeds growing in that area, so they can't bridge the copper that way).

I found self-adhesive copper tape (2" wide x 66 feet) on Amazon for about \$10/roll (May 2025). I have also seen tape about 3/8" wide, and I know of one grower who wraps it around the stem on the emerging inflorescence - just to make doubly sure that the slugs won't get to the buds.

If you have a greenhouse, it is suggested that you use copper around bench legs and horizontally on the lower walls to prevent infestation from any ground dwellers.

Lastly, I have seen slugs lower themselves from an overhead branch on a string of mucus. So, instead of relying on a tree for shade, add a superstructure to your table, and drape shade cloth over it. The superstructure does not need to be strong, 2x3 up-rights & 2x2 cross pieces should be enough.

