

Snail Pellets in a Pet Friendly Garden

Pet owners are always concerned about using snail pellets in the garden as dogs (and sometimes cats) have a bad habit of eating anything that looks slightly palatable in the garden. These days' snail and slug pellets contain a bittering agent which prevents most cats and dogs from eating them.

But, to be extra safe, try these simple techniques:

- Don't leave pellets in piles in the garden as this runs the risk of the pet eating many before realising that they taste terrible. Instead, space them around the area so that he eats one before deciding not to go back for seconds.
- Hide pellets in clumped plants that pets are not able to get into such as the base of agapanthus. Fortunately, these are often the areas that snails love also.
- Make a snail pellet trap using a cordial bottle with a door cut out of it. Place a few pellets inside and place in a shady, damp area of the garden ready for the snails to find.
- Store pellets inside a cupboard or in a sealed container so that cats and dogs can't find them as they explore the garden shed or garage.



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Winter Garden Pests

Slugs and snails become more active as the weather cools down and there is more moisture around.

These destructive pests will devour complete seedlings overnight so they need to be controlled any way you can.



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Snail and Slug control

Slugs and snails become more active as the weather cools down and there is more moisture around. These destructive pests will devour complete seedlings overnight so they need to be controlled any way you can. Beer traps, salt, squashing, coffee grinds or copper spray barriers all work to a certain extent but nothing beats a friendly Khaki Campbell duck.



Snails

What do they look like?

Common garden snails have brown shells which can be over 30mm in size. They hide in shady, protected areas and then in summer seal their shell and remain inactive until the weather cools.

White Italian snails are less than 20mm in size. These thrive in alkaline sandy soils, often along the coast.

Most Active: Most prevalent April to October.

What damage do they cause?

Common garden snails do extensive damage to seedlings, garden plants and vegetables and can also damage citrus, vines and fruit trees. White Italian snails are particularly



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damaging to crops but can strip garden plants and form masses on vertical surfaces over summer to survive the heat.

What should you do?

Keep the area weed free and reduce places that they hide. Pet friendly snail baits are best applied in April to kill snails before they breed but are useful in other seasons also. Alternatively, try the beer traps for these as well as the slugs. Collecting white Italian snails during summer when they are massed on vertical surfaces will help reduce their numbers.

Slugs

What do they look like?

Slugs don't have shells so generally live in areas that are very moist, often where there are clay soils.



Most Active: Most prevalent from April to October. Outbreaks can occur after wet summers.

What damage do they cause?

Like snails, slugs will quickly demolish seedlings and damage ornamentals and vegetables.

What should you do?

Use pet-friendly baits especially in April to reduce numbers before they lay eggs.

Try setting beer traps in shallow trays at soil level. The slugs will crawl in, get drunk and die a happy death.



Cut Worms

What do they look like?

These are the caterpillar of night-flying moths that lay their eggs in the soil. The caterpillars are up to 40mm and light grey to black in colour. They eat at night and shelter in the soil during the day. If disturbed they curl up into a flat coil.



Most Active: Most active during periods of rain.

What damage do they cause?

They attack seedlings eating through the stems at ground level but will also affect soft fruit such as strawberries.

What should you do?

Place small, open ended plastic cups or drink bottles around seedlings to protect them. Use organic biological controls such as Dipel or Success Ultra to spray plants well, including the underside of leaves.



Better Tip

Remember not all that moves in the garden is destructive or detrimental. Allow the predatory insects to build up in numbers so they can keep the destructive pests in balance. If sprays are needed for certain situations always reach for the safe alternatives. Beat-a-weed will control small seedling weeds and is safe for pets and children.