

# Slug and snail spotting!



The Spanish slug

**Slug and snail damage is usually more obvious than the pests themselves. But our members seized the challenge to take part in our Slug and Snail Survey. They recorded the types of slugs and snails they found in their gardens and allotments, and revealed their favourite organic control methods.**

There are 30 species of slug and 80 snail species found in the UK. Those most commonly recorded in our survey were the garden slug (*Arion hortensis*) and the garden snail (*Helix aspersa*) – each making up 25% of all slugs and snails seen. Next came the red/black slug (*Arion ater*) and banded snails (*Cepaea nemoralis*) – seen by over 60% of all participants. Other species recorded, but with much less frequency, were the leopard slug (*Limax maximus*), the strawberry snail (*Trochulus striolatus*), the dusky slug (*Arion subfuscus*) and the keeled slug (*Milax budapestensis*). The survey only looked at slugs living above ground. If we had also asked people to look in the soil, the number of keeled slugs, which eat potatoes, would probably have been much greater.

## Control methods

The most common methods of control used were: encouraging natural predators such as ground beetles; barriers; and removal by hand. Some people mentioned that copper barriers were

particularly effective. One member said: “Copper banded barriers were more effective than regular ones and my carrots and peas survived.” However, these are really only practical for protecting plants in containers or raised beds.

Beer traps were used by 40% of the participants, and around one third used ferric phosphate slug pellets, which are in the ‘not for regular use’ category of our Organic Gardening Guidelines. These are available through the Organic Gardening Catalogue.

A fact sheet on how to tackle slugs and snails organically is available in the Members’ Area of [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk).

## Have you seen this slug?

The Spanish slug (*Arion vulgaris*) was identified in the UK for the first time in 2012, in a garden in Norwich.

This slug can grow to 15 cm, tolerates hotter and drier conditions than our native species, produces twice as many eggs and has a more extensive diet, including crops not normally susceptible to slug damage. The key observation that points to a possible Spanish slug infestation is its presence in unusually large numbers eg more than 100 in a small garden. Newly hatched Spanish slugs will likely be seen in groups of ten or more, and have two dark lines down their backs.

SlugWatch UK is keen to find out how widespread the Spanish slug has become, so please report sightings. For further details visit [www.slugwatch.co.uk](http://www.slugwatch.co.uk).



The most commonly spotted snail, *Helix aspersa*.