

WATER AND THE USE OF GARDEN CHEMICALS



LOOKING AFTER YOUR GARDEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

All gardeners and allotment holders will know the challenge of dealing with pests. There are many chemicals on the market to help tackle garden pests, but it is vital that they are used responsibly and disposed of correctly.

GARDEN PEST CONTROL

One of the biggest challenges that gardeners face is damage from slugs and snails, and applying slug pellets can help deal with this problem. However many slug pellet brands contain a chemical called metaldehyde, which is highly soluble in water and can find its way into local streams, rivers and reservoirs.

Metaldehyde is very effective at killing these hungry pests. However it is extremely difficult to remove during the normal water treatment process we use to provide clean and safe drinking water. If even the smallest amount of metaldehyde finds its way into streams, rivers and reservoirs it can cause water quality problems.

GARDEN POLLUTION PATHWAYS

- 1 Seepage of garden pesticides or other pollutants into groundwater
- 2 Pollutants poured into drains
- 3 Leaks from pipework
- 4 Surface water drains
- 5 Pollution seeps into groundwater
- 6 Polluted surface water abstracted at water treatment works



UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

The use of metaldehyde slug pellets may also cause problems for the wildlife we love to see. Excess pellets available in the environment from over application can pose a risk of poisoning for wildlife, such as mammals and birds. Similarly pets and children are at risk and pellets should always be applied and stored safely and according to the manufacturer's instructions.

HELPING TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

We've been working with farmers across the region, to encourage them to change farming practices by using alternative slug pellets that contain ferric phosphate, which is less soluble in water.

Gardeners and allotment users can also play their part in helping us to protect water and the environment by choosing to use an alternative to metaldehyde slug pellets for slug control.

TIPS FOR USING GARDEN CHEMICALS

- ✓ Consider using organic alternatives, they can be just as effective and have reduced impact on the environment.
- ✓ Always follow the instructions on the packaging – even if you have used the product before. Instructions often change and you should always familiarise yourself with the hazards to yourself and the environment.
- ✓ Apply any chemicals at the concentration recommended by the manufacturer.
- ✓ If your allotment or garden is close to a stream or ditch, then take extra care when making applications.
- ✓ Clear up any spills immediately.
- ✓ Always store your pesticides carefully – they must be kept sealed tightly in a clean, dry place away from children and animals.
- ✗ Never pour unwanted chemicals down a drain. Your local council will be able to give you advice on where to dispose of chemicals.
- ✗ Do not apply chemicals if rain is expected to avoid reduced effectiveness and pesticides being washed away.



WILDLIFE FRIENDLY GARDENING

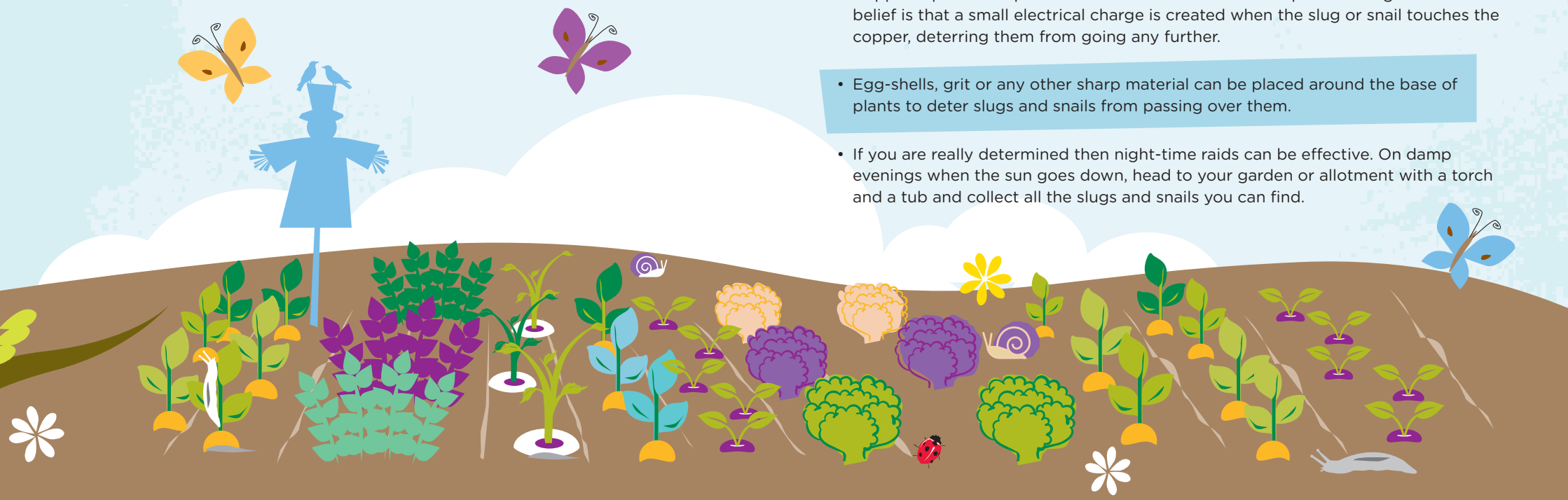
Many of the plants and creatures we consider to be pests in the garden, including slugs and snails, provide a tasty meal to something else - this can work to the gardener's advantage!

Making your garden or allotment wildlife friendly encourages these natural predators, so consider including wild areas into your planting scheme.

Slugs and snails play an important role in the environment, not only as food for other animals, but they also break down and recycle plant matter. There are many benefits in accepting that these animals should be present in your garden or allotment and in practising slug deterrent or control approaches only when absolutely necessary.

There are a number of other ways in which you can control and reduce the impact of slugs and snails in your garden without using metaldehyde-based slug pellets:

- Use slug pellets with the alternative active ingredient ferric phosphate instead of those containing metaldehyde. Ferric phosphate is not soluble in water and is approved by the Soil Association for organic use.
- Planting a sacrificial crop that slugs and snails really love will, in theory, entice them away from the plants and vegetables you are trying to protect, including your prize marrow!
- The way in which you prepare your soil before planting can help to reduce slug and snail numbers, particularly in clay soils where slugs are prevalent. Firming or rolling soil will reduce the availability and accessibility of damp retreats within the soil.
- During the day, slugs and snails retreat to safe havens away from the reach of the sun. Trap them by mimicking these refuges. Place the skin of a grapefruit or a melon, hollow-side down onto the ground. Lift these traps in the morning and collect any slugs and snails present.
- Lifting pots off the ground with pot feet adds an additional obstacle.
- Copper tape can be placed around the feet and rims of pots forming a barrier. The belief is that a small electrical charge is created when the slug or snail touches the copper, deterring them from going any further.
- Egg-shells, grit or any other sharp material can be placed around the base of plants to deter slugs and snails from passing over them.
- If you are really determined then night-time raids can be effective. On damp evenings when the sun goes down, head to your garden or allotment with a torch and a tub and collect all the slugs and snails you can find.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

about using chemicals in the garden safely visit
anglianwater.co.uk/garden-chemicals

