

Controlling garden-variety pests without the harsh chemicals

Organic pest control is the way forward for any forward-thinking, nature-loving Gardener. While slug pellets and poison can be fast and effective, they're also harsh and chemically-based.

One of the biggest benefits of growing your own fruit or veg in a garden or allotment is the fresh, chemical-free taste you can't get with supermarket stock - so don't spite yourself by feeding your soil harmful pest control products.

Manufacturers are already responding to calls for more organic treatments, but there are some home remedies you can easily make yourself.

Don't get eggy!

After using eggs, don't throw the shells away - leave them to soak in a bowl of warm water for a day, then crush them up and sprinkle them around your plants. This will keep the slugs away, and as an extra bonus, eggshells are compostable!

Down in one!

Did you know that slugs and snails are attracted to beer? Well, it's actually the yeast in the beer. If you put a small dish of beer by your plants, the slugs will make their way towards it.

The idea is that they get drunk and drown - while it's a bit of a morbid method, it is effective. Make sure you bury the container as low as you can so they can actually get in!

For the snail lovers among us...

If you're anything like me, you'll cry when you step on a snail, build a tiny memorial site and force your parents to attend its funeral. I might've been 9, it might've been last week...

Slugs and snails are notoriously pesky after rain and at night. So, if you don't want to put down anything that will kill them, go outside at night with a torch and handpick them off your plants and into a container (with air holes!)

Remember, plants are like homing beacons to them, so take them on a road trip.

Ribbet, ribbet

If you've got the space and time, encouraging local wildlife can be not only an effective pest control treatment, but one that will make your soul happy too.

Frogs and toads will help you get rid of the smaller slugs and snails, while hedgehogs and birds will clear up the fatter ones. You'll be healing the ecosystem *and* your heart!

Getting to the root of the problem

It's happened to the best of us - the pride of your garden will go from looking gorgeously healthy one day to sad and droopy the next. Where did it all go wrong?!

If you've got carrots or cabbages planted in your vegetable patch, watch out for Carrot Fly and Cabbage Root Fly. These pesky little insects burrow down into the root of the plant and eat away from the inside out. While Carrot Flies may not kill the carrot plants completely, you'll be left with a withered crop and maggot-infested roots.

Feed the birds

As mentioned before, birds are great pest control for slugs and snails - but they can also be useful for getting rid of caterpillars. These cute, fluffy pests aren't so cute and fluffy when you come down to a barren buddleia bush.

Installing a bird feeder in your garden or allotment will encourage them to come and hang out with you, picking off any pests while they go. The trick is to not put *too much* food out, so they still have to go looking for something to fill them up.

Keep using organic, natural and harmless pest control methods to help keep the environment, your crops and ultimately yourself safe and healthy.