

SLUGS

These pests must be combated in as many different ways as you can devise. Trap them in beer traps: these can be made from yoghurt pots or plastic cups sunk into the ground and filled with beer, or alternatively Slug X traps can be bought and are particularly effective. It is also worth picking slugs off at night and then killing them in strong salty water. Very susceptible plants will need barriers, however. For plants in pots sticky backed copper tape is best, it gives the slugs a small electric shock, also stick it round the yoghurt pots you are using for your brassicas and round sections of large plastic drinks bottles cut to make cylinders to put over vulnerable plants. Wood ash and coffee grounds are quite effective deterrents but can stunt plant growth. Egg shells and other sharp materials are useless. Some commercial products are effective but need renewing after rain so can become expensive to use.



To see examples of all these techniques and a wide range of organically grown plants visit

the ASK Organic Garden

a half acre garden within Woodside Walled Garden, situated 4 miles north of Jedburgh, east of the A68 on the B6400.

The ASK Organic Garden is open 7 days a week March to October 10am to 5pm. Someone from ASK is usually on hand to answer questions on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays between 11am and 4pm.

Produced for the ASK Organic Garden Club by ASK Organic, Wolfhopelee, Bonchester Bridge, Hawick. TD9 9TP. Telephone 01450 860291 and 860778. email da@askorganic.co.uk.

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HOME GROWN:

the organic way



The Healthy Garden

Healthy plants produce good crops and are a pleasure to look at but however careful we are pest and disease problems sometimes arise. The most effective way to combat a problem is to be vigilant and look out for early signs, then correctly identify the cause and take steps to remedy it. Know the enemy and apply measures that will disrupt its life cycle!



Wherever possible, organic gardeners try to prevent a problem from occurring in the first place: prevention is easier than cure. Understanding how the pest lives lets us put up suitable barriers round the host plant, such barriers are pest specific and will not kill non-target species.

ROOTFLY

Cabbage (*Delia radicum*) and Carrot (*Psila rosae*) rootfly are a major pest in the vegetable garden and act in similar ways: the adult fly lays its eggs close to the plant and once hatched the larvae burrow down to eat the plant's roots.

The carrot rootfly attacks parsnips, parsley, dill and celery as well as carrots, feeding on the fine, young roots and causing reddening of the leaves, stunted growth or death. This fly has 2 or 3 generations every year. Fine insect mesh prevents the rootfly, and other small insect pests, from getting close to the plant. Simply anchor the mesh to the ground, laying it on top of the carrots, and it will be pushed up by the growing plants. Do not remove the net in the autumn, the fly may still be around.

For brassicas use cabbage collars which can be bought or made. Use a soft and thick material which can easily be cut to a square or circle at least 8cm across, with a Y-shaped slit in the middle which wraps round the stem of the plant when the collar is placed flat on the ground. Another good barrier is a large yoghurt pot with its base cut out: invert this over the young plant to provide shelter from wind as well as rootfly.

CABBAGE WHITE BUTTERFLY CATERPILLARS

Most of the caterpillars that cause problems are Small Whites, there are several generations of these butterflies during the year. To protect against them insect mesh, or preferably insect net can be used. Make frames (60-80cm high depending on the height of the plant) and lay insect net over them, this will stop the butterflies from laying eggs. Insect net looks like fine fruitcage net, for brassicas this coarser mesh is better as the air is not warmed around the plants which would cause sappy growth.

BIRDS

They can be pests as well as friends. A fruitcage is essential if you want to enjoy undamaged raspberries or tayberries. For strawberries a section of fruitcage net supported on

cloche hoops works fine; especially since strawberries have to be renewed every 3 or 4 years and must not be replanted in the same site.

Pigeons will also attack greens and peas, stripping leaves and pods; fruitcage net suspended over the crop thwarts them, but make the supports strong as the birds are heavy and will break thin supports when they land on the net to try to reach the crop underneath.

SAWFLIES AND RASPBERRY BEETLE

There are a large number of sawflies attacking a range of crops, such as gooseberries, apples, turnips and cherries. They, along with the raspberry beetle, are best combated using solid mulches; the mulches can be plastic (woven or plain) cardboard or newspaper. If they look unsightly they can be covered with grass clippings or bark chips. Lay the barrier mulch round the plant in the early spring and then remove it in the autumn, cultivating the soil round the gooseberry bush or raspberry canes. The pest larvae will have been sheltering in the mulch you remove and birds will pick over the soil during the winter to eat any others. Renew the barrier in spring to prevent any remaining pests from emerging.

The mulch method does not work with Solomon's Seal sawfly. For this hand picking or siting a peanut feeder near the affected plants are the only options, though work is being done to develop a biological control.

GREASEBANDS

These are sticky bands of tape that trap insect pests crawling over them. They can be used on fruit trees to protect against Winter Moth: the 3 Winter Moth species that damage buds, leaves and blossom of apples, pears, plums and many ornamental shrubs and trees have a similar life cycle to sawflies. In early spring the flightless females climb the trunk, mate with the flying males and lay around 200 eggs in forming buds. Irregular holes will disfigure the foliage and the blossom can be badly damaged. The solution is to wrap a greaseband tightly round the trunk of the threatened tree or shrub, and this will prevent the moth from climbing up.

Greasebands can also be used to trap adult vine weevils. Wrap the band round a flower pot and the weevil will be unable to reach, feed on and lay eggs in container-grown plants.