

2. How can you stop slugs eating flowers?

Children create a home that gives slugs some choice about their environment.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify and name a variety of plants and animals in their habitats, including micro-habitats.
- To find out about and describe the basic needs of animals, including humans, for survival (water, food, air).

SLUGS INVESTIGATION

Note: You can begin this activity by discussing the picture in the storybook - does it look like a 'real' slug? Children can try describing the appearance of slugs before handling them.

Resource ideas

Tidy tray or shoe box cardboard clear plastic bag black sugar paper paper tissues tongs, rubber gloves or leaves.

The question chosen to illustrate here is:

- Do slugs like the light or dark (or wet /dry) more?

Children create a home that gives some slugs choices over their environment. Depending on the age and ability of the children, they can give the slugs a small or large number of choices. At the simplest level, children give the slugs a choice of two environments. More able children can give the slugs a choice of four environments. Possibilities are shown overleaf.

Predictions can be made about the conditions the slugs will prefer, possibly based on knowledge of their own garden at home or where slugs are found. This may help the children in the creation of the environment. The prediction can be a painting or drawing to show the slug's 'home'.

Slug care: The slugs can be carefully picked up with tongs, with a large leaf or wearing rubber gloves. The large leaf is preferable, as this does not convey the message that slugs are dangerous or poisonous in any way.

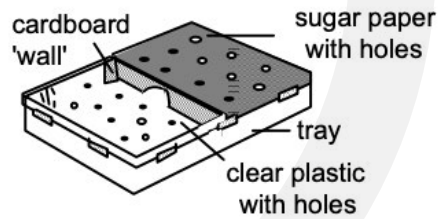
The slugs must have an option of moisture, and covered containers must have holes pierced in the lid. Slugs can be kept overnight, and for another 24 hour period, if followed immediately with a test to find out which foods slugs eat.

The light/dark environment has been shown in a tidy tray (or shoe box). A wet/dry environment can have a complete cover, and wet paper tissues in one half and dry paper tissues in the other half. An additional wall and doorways are required for the 4-choice tray. The tissues may need repeated dampening if slugs are left overnight. A few small stones can be added to the centre of each section of the box. The same number of slugs is carefully placed in each section of the box, and then left for 8-16 hours. Their position can be checked every hour, or 2- 3 times in 24 hours.

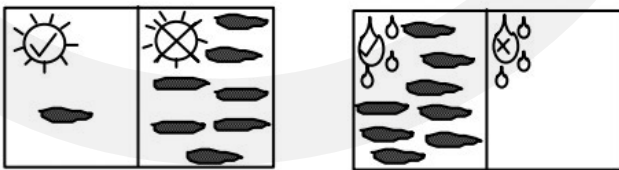
light	dark
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wet	dry
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light & dry	dark & dry
light & wet	dark & wet



Children can **record** what they find out in pictures, e.g.



Finally, the children decide from their results what the prince should do to outwit the princess (e.g. provide the slugs with the 'ideal' home to entice them away from her garden). These decisions can be written in a letter or tape-recorded as a telephone message, to the prince.

*teacher of 5 year olds
Rosyth*

The tape-recording was good, as the children all wanted to 'talk' to the prince and tell him their findings.

The children tell Prince Swashbuckle the best thing to do, and include the results, or 'proof', that the idea has been tested. Letters can be produced using a word processor.

Once children have chosen the best habitat, they can investigate food choices. Similar arrangements to those shown above can be used to give the slugs a range of foods in different sections of a tray or box. The home can be set up with foodstuffs in each half or quadrant, and the box inspected every 1, 2 or 3 hours. Foods can include lettuce, flowers, apple cores, salt and biscuits.

Gardeners who don't want to kill slugs with pellets use some of the following methods:

- Cultivate the soil to kill the eggs
- Encourage hedgehogs, frogs and thrushes - which eat slugs
- Make pitfall traps in the ground and fill with stale beer
- Trap slugs in upturned hollow grapefruit hemispheres
- Hand-pick slugs at night with tongs and move them to a local woodland!