

## Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for March

Since I've been writing this column since 2008, I often mistakenly assume that readers understand that I encourage the use of organic and safe garden practices for feeding, fertilizing, spraying, or eliminating pests. There are always ways to create a beautiful garden without the use of toxic chemicals, insecticides, herbicides, and pesticides. Keeping our children, pets, and wildlife safe and healthy is of the utmost importance. Whether I specify an organic method or not, please always use eco-friendly products. By doing so, we'll also heal our planet.

**ELIMINATE SNAILS:** Non-toxic to children, chickens, and other pets, Sluggo and Natria are two organic baits containing iron phosphate which naturally occurs in soil. Non-ingested bait degrades and becomes part of the soil.

Other ways to purge snails and slugs include:

- a. Handpicking them. I often go out at night with a flashlight and a bucket. If you have chickens, ducks, or geese, they'll feast on escargot. Otherwise, at the risk of sounding cruel, you must kill them. We do the snail stomp. Put on boots and dance around. Other ways include drowning them in a bucket of water.
- b. Trapping them. Snails like to hide in damp, dark refuges under flowerpots, boards or plants. Gather them in the morning after their nightly raid.
- c. Beer bowls. Snails are attracted to the fermenting yeast of beers. If you put out saucers or shallow bowls of beer, they will fall in. They don't get drunk. They drown in the beer.
- d. Copper barriers. Copper bands or strips are probably the most effective barrier to keep snails and slugs out of pots and plants. It is work-intensive and more expensive, but especially useful around trees.
- e. Decollate snails: These predatory snails have been used in Southern California to control young small brown snails in citrus groves. However, they cannot be used in Northern California as they would endanger other mollusk species.

Once you have killed your snails, you can add them to your compost pile where their moist bodies will decompose quickly. The shells will take a bit longer but will add nutrients as they compost.

**UPGRADE** your outdoor living to be a place that encourages peacefulness and solitude. Create an area where you can work and listen to the sounds of nature.

**SUPPORT** National Farmworkers Awareness Week March 25-31 by purchasing produce from socially responsible vendors.



Stone wall at the site of the 7th Century Seven Churches of the Aran Islands ("Na Seacht Teampall" in the Gaelic) with lawn daisies growing.

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