



Backyard Buddies May 2015

Title: **A telling trail**

Snails. While some may eat them, most of us just want to kill them. Snails impact on home gardens, vineyards, orchards and crops across Western Australia. The most common species in Western Australia are the common garden snail (*Cornu aspersum*), white Italian snail (*Theba pisana*), Small pointed (conical) snail (*Prietocella barbara*) and vineyard or common white snail (*Cernuella virgata*). So it's worthwhile knowing a little about their life cycle to aid your control efforts.

Snails and slugs are similar biologically. They are hermaphrodites (each individual has both male and female reproductive organs) and both members can lay eggs during the breeding season. Mating usually takes place from mid-autumn to mid-winter when moist conditions return after summer. Two to four weeks after mating, spherical pearl-white eggs are laid into the moist soil and egg laying can continue until late winter. Eggs hatch after two to four weeks and young slugs and snails feed throughout winter and spring, trying to grow enough to last through the hot and dry summer months. Adults survive the dry summer by going into aestivation (period of inaction), however eggs cannot survive a hot, dry summer.

For the home gardener, snail control is important to look at in March through May, so adults can be controlled before they mate and lay eggs. In winter, organic solutions include the placement of beer, wine and yeast products in containers to drown the snails. For details on chemical and cultural control, barriers and sprays, please see our website.

What to look out for

The green snail (*Cantareus aperta* aka *Helix aperta*) was found in the 1980s in market gardens, suburban gardens and neighbouring bush areas around Perth. Quarantine WA are concerned that this snail could spread and become a pest in other horticultural and agricultural areas in the State. The shells of green snails are about 15 to 25 mm in diameter, and are light green to greenish-brown in colour. The body is light green to white.

Green snails can be spread through the movement of infested plant material eg. in hay bales, nursery stock or harvested vegetables. There are Quarantine restrictions in place to prevent the movement of host material within infested areas to other States and Territories of Australia.

Anyone who sees this snail outside metropolitan Perth is asked to please report it to the Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS) on freecall 1800 084 881 or email (especially with photos) info@agric.wa.gov.au. Where possible send specimens in a sealed container to: Pest and Disease Information Service, Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia, 3 Baron-Hay Court, South Perth, 6151.

Control and more information

Search our website by typing 'snail' in the search bar to see related articles. The article 'Snail and slug control' is best suited for home gardeners while another article 'Identification and control of pest slugs and snails for broadacre crops in WA' gives some great detailed information and photos that's valuable for home gardener and commercial growers alike.

Banner image: garden snail



Left to right: Garden snail, green snail, white Italian snail



Small pointed snail