

Control of the Giant African Snail

Recognize the problem

Giant African snails are an invasive, and can cause extensive damage to important food crops and other agricultural and natural resources. They eat crops, reducing yields and making them unsuitable for sale.

Some snails grow to 15 cm in length and 5- 8 cm wide, whereas others only grow to 6.5 cm in length. Commonly, the shells are light brown with darker brown and cream bands.

Background

The snail attacks more than 500 types of plants, but it prefers breadfruit, cassava, cocoa, papaya, peanut, rubber and most species of legumes and cucurbits. Cuttings and seedlings are especially vulnerable. The adult snails prefer to feed on decaying organic matter, whereas young snails can cause serious damage to living plants especially flowers and vegetables. Damage is greatest when outbreaks first occur in a new area. Population explosions result in hundreds of snails per square metre. A snail can produce 1200 eggs per year and live for up to 9 years.

The snail feeds at night or when the weather is overcast and rainy during the day. It avoids the sun by sheltering under stones, logs or in crevices. If dry weather lasts, the snail seals the opening of the shell and awaits the return of favourable conditions.

Management

There are two main options utilized in the control and eradication of the snail, these are:

- Hand-picking of the snails and killing them in sea water or brine. The snails should be left for two days.
- Treatment of infested area with a molluscicide, such as metaldehyde. Pellets are scattered in small patches 12" square on the ground, they should be replaced when eaten or deteriorate due to weather. One small pellet is enough to kill a snail. Take care not to expose domestic animals and wildlife to metaldehyde, as it is also toxic to these animals.

Note: The Entomology Department will pay 50 cents per pound for the snails. Bag the snails and contact the Department for pick up. The snails are destroyed by burning.

Giant African snails are becoming a major pest and the population can increase rapidly. Young snails begin to lay eggs at 6 months old. (Photo by Roberta Zimmerman, USDA APHIS)



They prefer wet weather but can seal themselves to prevent water loss and become dormant during dry spells. (Photo by David G. Robinson, USDA APHIS PPQ)



When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.

Scientific name(s) > *Achatina fulica*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Barbados



Authors: Tonya Ifill
Graeme Hall
tel: 1-246-434-5000

Edited by Plantwise.