

HOME REMEDY

By James Collins

My daughter Patricia is an avid gardener. Her backyard and the area around the house sparkle with flowers of different varieties and colors. She tends the garden regularly, loves the aromas, is proud of her work and the presentation. With every blessing comes a curse. To the gardener the slug, the slimy nighttime interloper is the enemy. It moves very slowly leaving a slime trail as it approaches the garden to do damage. It may be the bane of existence to every gardener, but it is a hated foe to my daughter.

Having previously lived in Virginia where the slugs were in greater abundance, Patricia learned a home remedy that solves the problem. If you put out a bowl and fill it with beer, it attracts the slugs that climb the sides of the bowl to drink the liquid, fall in and drown. In the morning the gardener finds anywhere from two to six slugs dead in the bowl. The gardener does not have to handle the slimy creatures, as all they have to do is dump the bowl on the grass off to the side and let nature take its course. By evening, all the remains are gone. The slugs are food for a number of creatures and the carcasses quickly disappear. Patricia demonstrated this to all the neighbors up and down the street. Because of the infestation of slugs within the area, every house shortly displayed a bowl, a pan, or a tray full of beer on the front lawn immediately in front of the flowers. I assumed all the beers were of different manufacture but the results were similar.

On one occasion, Patricia went out to tend her garden and discovered a squirrel apparently dead lying flat on his back with arms and legs akimbo and his tail lying flat and straight. Patricia poked the squirrel with a rake and got no movement. She was not about to handle a dead squirrel and so called for her husband. Jeff appeared, viewed the squirrel, went and got a shovel and, using the rake, tried to roll the squirrel onto the shovel blade. At that instant, the squirrel revived, jumped off the shovel and staggered towards the closest oak tree. Then, as he climbed the tree, he slipped twice, each time he fell down landing on his back replicating the posture he had when first located. Patricia and Jeff both agreed the squirrel was drunk. Obviously, he had been sampling the beer put out for the slugs.

Now Jeff noted that the number of squirrels in the area seemed more abundant than usual. He got his binoculars and began to monitor the trees to see what was going on with the squirrels. These are very intelligent creatures, as any bird lover knows who tries to protect their birdseed from the miscreants. No matter what kind of defense you put into the bird feeders, the squirrels will overcome.

Jeff began to notice that the squirrels were congregating in little groups of four, where previously they always appeared alone or occasionally in pairs. He began to observe these little groups and made notes. On one unforgettable occasion, he observed on a large oak branch, four squirrels in an unusual cluster. One sat facing a little group of three who sat in line facing the first one. What was unusual was that each of the squirrels had both their paws raised with three facing the fourth who appeared to be the leader. There was a lot of chattering going on which could be heard all across the yard. The squirrel on the far right seemed less agitated than the other two. He lowered his paws, slumped to the right and fell out of the tree. The remaining squirrels rushed to the edge looked down and were chattering loudly. The squirrel on the ground shook his head, chattered and started climbing the tree. Again, Jeff saw the familiar staggering drunk falling out of the tree routine. The squirrel was obviously drunk. Jeff then realized that this meeting of four was some kind of a squirrel intervention. This was the equivalent of the squirrel's alcoholics anonymous (SAA). Jeff started to laugh. He always knew the squirrels were smart but, he did not realize they could form these kinds of organizations.

Later in the summer when the slugs disappeared, homeowners no longer placed bowls of beer on the lawns and the squirrels lost their alcohol supply. But I don't write a The squirrels will eventually dry out. However, if you are out walking in the woods, look up and be careful to avoid falling squirrels. Drying out is a multi-task process and takes a while, but I am sure the squirrel AA will keep their backsliders in line.

THE END