

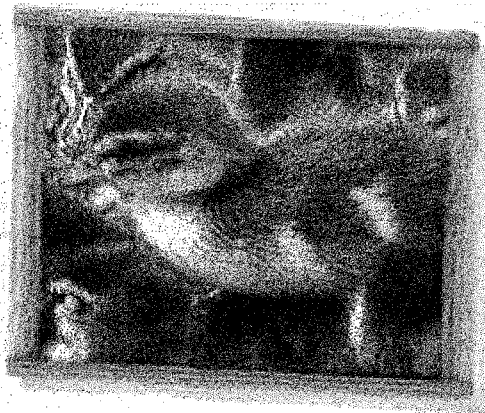
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Gardens

Today's Home and Gardening Tips

DUCKS, SLUGS & SNAILS

I always look forward to the arrival of spring even though it represents extra work for me in the garden. But along with the Easter bunny, spring ducklings can arrive to help keep certain pests under control.



Ducks can be one of the best ways to deal with slugs and snails in the garden and a lot of fun to have around. When ducklings are just a few hours old they have plenty of egg yolk still stored in their systems so they don't need to eat for couple of days. This allows duck breeders like the ones at Metzger Farms in Gonzales, California to raise and ship ducks almost anywhere in the world.

In just a matter of weeks day old ducklings will double and triple in size, seemingly overnight. They'll turn into slug eating machines. They love the flavor of slugs and a few ducks can eat hundreds of them in a day.

Now if you think that domesticated ducks only come in one model like the standard Pekin duck from nursery rhymes you'd better look again. There are solid black ones with a green sheen called Cyuga and the Ruens are a French breed that look like a big fat Mallard. And if you love the duck in the movie "Babe" as much as I did you won't be able to resist the slender Indian Runner ducks. If you're looking for a duck that's already dressed for Easter you might try White Crested duck. They look like they're already wearing Easter bonnets.

Spring is a busy time at Metzger Farms. They are dispatching thousands of ducklings around the country so the slugs and snails better watch out. If you have the time to care for ducks and the space to raise them, adding a few ducks can be entertaining and a lot of fun for children. But the best reason for me as a gardener is that it makes slugs and snails a part of the food chain.