

Are You Eating My Crops? 2: The maritime garden snail

The maritime garden snail (*Cer­nuella virgata*) is a relatively small snail, and the second headliner in our new 12-month series called 'Are you eating my crops?'. Individual pests chosen for this series have not yet been reported in Texas, but are on the 'Watch List' due to their high level of pest importance or risk due to host availability. During this series we will cover several different crop pests, what to look for, and what they look like.

The maritime garden snails shell is globose-depressed and white or yellowish white in color with a prominent spotted spiral banding on the shell that is dark brown. The snails grow to be 6 to 19 mm high and 8 to 25 mm wide. Shell size and banding patterns can vary some. The maritime garden snail, like most other snails, are nocturnal and hide during the day. They are most active at night, in the mornings, or after the rain. During the summertime they can often be found in mass atop plants, feeding on new plant growth. They also aestivate (similar to hibernation) on plant heads and stalks. When they do this in large groups, it can contaminate crops and clog machinery. Attacked plants exhibit extensive rasping and defoliation. Like other mollusks, it can also be detected by signs of ribbon-like excrement and slime trails on plants and buildings.

The maritime garden snail closely resembles the white Italian snail (*Theba pisana*) in appearance and pest status. However, the white Italian snail has a more pronounced spiral banding. Also, the umbilicus (hole about which the shell spirals) appears as a circular hole rather than being partially obscured as in the white Italian snail. Texas is a "moderate" risk based on host availability for this snail. Various organizations and surveys are underway to monitor for the presence of this pest.

If you have question or concerns regarding the headliners, OR you believe you have identified a maritime garden snail infestation, contact invasives@shsu.edu for further instructions.



Banding of maritime garden snail (*Cer­nuella virgata*). Credit: Tenby Museum.



Group of maritime garden snails aestivating on plant. Credit: Poggiani Luciano.