

Yards are Riddled with Tunnels

Many homeowners are finding an unsightly maze of tunnels in their lawns and gardens. Moles cause major damage to our landscapes by tunneling close to the soil surface foraging for food. Despite the fact that they wreak havoc in our prize winning flower garden, or seemingly destroy the front yard, they are not in search of a vegetarian meal. For the most part, they have a voracious appetite and eat large amounts of grubs, earthworms, snail larvae, spiders and other adult insects.

Moles seem to possess a natural ability to sense danger, therefore, they can be somewhat challenging to control. However, learning a little about their life cycle and habits can make the job a whole lot easier. First, moles reproduce only one time a year, usually in early spring. So trying to eliminate pregnant females early on will reduce the possibility of having to contend with a family all summer long. Second, moles are active feeders all year round and can eat their weight in food daily. To do this, they must maintain an intricate maze of tunnels that allows them to cover a large area. An active run will be used several times a day. Third, moles do not eat grains or nuts so poison peanuts and other baits are of little use. Fumigants work, however, they need to be concentrated on the deep burrows found under the mounds and not the shallow runway tunnels used during feeding. Keep in mind, many effective fumigants are restricted use and can only be applied by a licensed pesticide applicator. Chewing gum, broken glass, bleaches, windmills, and human hair are all "old-timer" remedies that meet with limited success. Unfortunately, there are no "short cuts" or "magic wands" when it comes to controlling moles. The only truly reliable method for mole control is the use of traps.

There are three types of traps available and all seem to work equally as well. The brand names are: Out O' Sight (scissor-jawed), Harpoon mole trap, and Nash (choker loop) mole trap. As with any piece of lawn or garden equipment, it is important that you read and follow all manufacturer directions and warnings as traps can be dangerous if not used properly. The secret to using a trap successfully is to place the trap directly over an actively used tunnel or run. To identify an active run, step-on the tunnels to mash them down, and wait until the next day to see which ones are raised again. Those that are raised should be used for the traps. To set the traps, excavate a small portion of the tunnel and replace the soil loosely. Be careful not to build the mound too high as to prevent the trap from reaching the mole when sprung. Place the trap directly over the run and secure it in place so the recoil will not lift the trap out of the ground.

Make sure that the triggering mechanism is placed directly over the run and just on top of the soil. As the mole tries to push the compressed tunnel open, it will trigger the trap. Any trap not sprung in two days should be relocated to a new tunnel.

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