

Signs of mole activity in lawns

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I think that most by now have finished up mowing lawns for the season. At least I hope that's the case.

Perhaps you have noticed mounds or piles of soil in the lawn? If so, it's likely you have moles in the lawn.

I can tell you from firsthand experience that moles can be a real nuisance in the lawn and garden.

Eastern moles are mammals that usually hang out in meadows, woodland areas and other areas where they can reproduce without being harmed by predators.

They then move into your lawn and garden can wreak havoc. As they create their subsurface tunnels they push the soil, turf and even smaller perennials up out of the ground, leaving a raised mound in their path.

There are two types of subsurface tunnels – one for feeding which tends to take a meandering path through the yard and ends without connecting to another tunnel.

The other type is the main tunnel and this is used almost daily. It's in more of a straight line and connects feeding tunnels to each other. This is important to know when it comes to control.

The mounds of soil that you see now are due to the fact that moles go deeper into the soil for the winter. They kick this pile of soil out of the ground as they dig deeper.

Moles don't feed on plant roots or grains. They eat insects. Therefore, my perennial garden, in which I worked really hard to create good soil for my perennials to grow, is also full of earthworms and other insects, making it a candy store for the moles.

In the lawn, the mounds of soil and the raised tunnels are annoying, especially when it comes to mowing. In addition, if we have a really dry spell, any plants (perennials or turfgrass) that are heaved out of the ground may dry out.

The best control for moles is trapping. This takes a little bit of work in order to be successful.

First of all, stamp down all of raised tunnels, especially those that are the main runs. One mole can cover a large area, sometimes up to an acre in size so narrow down your search in order to place the trap in the best location.

Check this area the next day to see if they have repaired the tunnels. If so, this is likely the area they are actively working. This is where you want to focus your trap.

In addition, use gloves when placing the traps as they can smell human scent and will avoid the area of the trap.

And if you don't get something in 24 hours, move the trap and try again.

If you're really good, like my dad, you can pinpoint them while they are actively moving through the tunnel and with a shovel and pitchfork, and well, you can figure the rest. This takes loads of patience!



Eastern mole, note the capacity for digging of the front paws



An uprooted begonia that is the result of a mole working under a bedding plant



Piles of soil mounded up as a result of moles going deeper for the winter