

SHARING OUR SPACES: MOLES



Practical advice for living alongside our wild neighbours

Moles are woodland animals by choice but, as trees have been cleared for agriculture and development, they have been forced to adapt to a new environment – one of manicured lawns, golf courses, and farmland – that can sometimes bring them into conflict with humans.

Moles live underground and are active diggers, creating up to twenty metres of tunnel a day! The mounds of earth created by their tunnelling can upset those who want aesthetically perfect lawns. Farmers also consider moles a 'pest', blaming them for exposing stones that damage machinery; for covering the field with fresh soil, reducing its yield; and for damaging young plants by disturbing their roots.

So-called 'pest' controllers may fumigate tunnels with poisonous gas, use scissor traps or poisoned bait to trap these little animals – all methods that cause terrible suffering. Moles are part of our rich and diverse British wildlife and, in some European countries, are a protected species. This factsheet is designed to provide practical advice for living alongside them.

SUMMARY

- Molehills appeared in your garden? Simply remove the soil and use it as potting compost
- Look for mole-detering plants to plant in your garden
- Non-toxic granules can help the recurring appearance of molehills
- Purchase a sonic deterrence device to encourage moles to move on
- Remember that digging will end once the mole has finished creating their home
- Practice tolerance for these wild creatures



In your garden

Moles eat earthworms and unwanted insect larvae, such as cockchafer and carrotfly, which makes gardens a welcoming environment for them. Their tunnels can help train and aerate heavy soils, and the fine soil of molehills makes terrific potting compost! However, their tunnelling can damage plant roots or be unsightly.

What can you do?

Rest assured there is no need to call so-called 'pest' controllers if a couple of molehills appear in your garden. Many molehills are at the end of a blind tunnel, so the mole may never visit that spot again, and the digging will stop once the mole has created his or her home. Changes in weather can also affect moles and their digging behaviour, so sometimes all you'll need is patience. Simply remove the soil that forms a molehill and eventually hills will stop appearing.

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For those who can't wait, there are two plants that help deter moles. Caper Spurge – also known as Paper Spurge – is an attractive biennial that is said to exude a scent that moles don't like. The Caster Bean plant may also encourage moles to move on. Since commercial mole repellents are made from castor oil, it's clear where this plant gets its reputation for deterring moles organically. Both plants are poisonous, however, and should not be





grown around small children or animal companions. There are also chemical mole repellents on the market that are inexpensive, non-toxic powders or granules that can be sprinkled directly onto molehills. They are available from DIY stores, online, and are not harmful to moles.

Sports pitches and community areas

Molehills can cause problems if they pop up on sports pitches used for games and community activities. However, moles mainly dig their tunnel when the soil is damp and easily worked, spending far less time digging during the summer months, when sports pitches are in high demand. Keeping pitches free of molehills during the summer is very little work.

What can you do?

Those who look after sports pitches will likely check the ground ahead of use, to ensure there is no litter or fouling, so it is as simple as using a shovel to flatten any molehills that popped up during the winter months.

There are also sonic mole repellents can be found in some hardware stores or be bought online. They are cheap, effective and easy to use, with spikes that are pushed into the ground where they emit deep frequency vibrations through the soil that moles don't like. The distance they reach depends on the soil type, but one good quality device should cover an average sports pitch.



“Come on, let's not get too worked up. That would be making a mountain out of a... well, you know what I mean. The destruction won't go on forever because, once a mole has finished building its underground territory, it will stop digging. Hence, no more molehills. Then you can enjoy a more harmonious relationship with one of the UK's cutest little noses” - **Bill Oddie**



For more advice contact Humane Wildlife Solutions:
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