Moles

Question. Every spring when the snow melts there are tunnels in the lawn. What causes this?

Answer. The most likely culprit is moles. A close relative of the shrew, moles feed largely on insects and earthworms. In fact, moles feed on many pestiferous beetle larvae such as the white grubs found in lawns. They also feed on earthworms, spiders and centipedes. What most people find objectionable are the mole hills and tunnels pushed up into their lawns. The ridges, or feeding runways, may only be used once. Mole hills, on the other hand, are created when excavated soil is pushed to the surface. Mole hills look like miniature volcanoes.

The simplest solution to mole tunnels is to simply stamp them down or rake them apart. For the most part, damage is limited to the dried plant roots lifted up by the tunnel. If tunnels and hills keep reappearing, you may have to take stronger measures. Grub controls, applied to your lawn between mid-June and mid-July, will reduce the number of beetle larvae in the soil. Buried fencing or barriers can be used to protect small areas. Or harpoon traps placed in active tunnels can kill the moles themselves. Moles, like voles, like loose friable soils. It is unlikely that they will move into dry, compacted, or stony soils. Who would ever have thought that not gardening might be the easiest way to avoid attracting these critters? What an unthinkable notion!

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center’s Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at answers@unh.edu

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