

How to rid your yard of pesky pests

By Metro Creative Connection

Spring is the season when lawn and garden equipment is dusted off, windows are washed and homes are aired out. Spring also is a great time to get started on lawn and garden projects.

Early spring might not be warm enough to start planting, but it is a great time to inspect a yard for any property damage or problems, including pests. Small animals like groundhogs can compromise lawn and garden projects. For example, vegetable gardens are prime targets for such pests, while trees and shrubbery offer cozy abodes and camouflage from other predators. Homeowners can grow frustrated by the damage such critters can do to their properties. But identifying the offenders early on can minimize that damage.

Groundhogs

Groundhogs are one of 14 species of marmots and are the largest members of the squirrel family. They frequent the areas where woodlands meet open spaces, like streams, roads or fields. Groundhogs feed on grass, plants, fruit and tree bark. They also will feast on home gardens during the summer



Groundhogs feed on plants, frustrating homeowners who want to keep the critters off of their properties.

and fall seasons. Groundhogs are most active during the warm months, when they forage and feast to build up large reserves for winter hibernation.

Humane methods of keeping groundhogs at bay include making the area inhospitable. Groundhogs can climb trees and fencing, but they're less likely to get into plants if there is a fence around them. Dogs can be preventive as well, as some dogs will chase groundhogs off of the property. The scent of urine can also scare groundhogs off. Using traps to capture and then relocate

groundhogs is another option.

Moles

Moles are cylindrical mammals that are most comfortable living a subterranean lifestyle. The fur of moles feels similar to velvet, and they have small ears and eyes. Moles also have strong forelimbs with forepaws that have an extra thumb and multiple joints. These help them to burrow underground effectively and hollow out subterranean chambers. The diet of moles is primarily earthworms and small invertebrates found in the soil. The runs they create beneath the surface of the soil are used to trap prey and store it in "larders" for later.

Moles are not harmful to lawns and gardens, but they can compromise the aesthetic appeal of lawns and gardens. That is why homeowners often want to prevent moles from making homes on their property. While there are traps and poisons available, one of the easiest ways to prevent mole infestation is to remove their sources of food. Homeowners also can cut back on watering property and get rid of grubs and other insects. Also, consider installing a mole barrier of aluminum sheeting or hardware cloth by burying these materials

between two and three feet deep along the perimeter of a lawn or garden.

Cats are natural enemies of moles, so sprinkling cat litter around mole runs may dissuade moles from visiting the area.

Voles

Often mistaken for mice, voles are small rodents with shorter, hairier tails and more stout bodies than mice. Voles are commonly referred to as meadow or field mice, and they feed on small plants and will eat nuts, fruits and even dead animals. Voles will frequently eat succulent root systems and burrow under lawns and gardens.

The runways of voles will be shallow, so they aren't prevalent in frequently cultivated soils. They are also less likely to burrow beneath frequently mowed lawns.

Voles do not like open areas. Remove protection like weeds, tall grass, dense vegetation, and heavy mulch to make a yard a less popular habitat. Keep grass adjacent to flower beds or gardens mowed short.

If groundhogs, moles and voles become particularly troublesome or infest a yard in great numbers, an exterminator may be needed.

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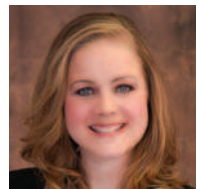
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