Moles are small, stout mammals that use their strong legs and paddle-like forefeet to "swim" through soils. With no external ears and eyes so small that you almost can't see them, these creatures are made for living underground. If you find yourself brushing a mole's hair, you'll see that there isn't resistance in either direction, enabling the mole to move forward or backwards in their burrow.

In spite of these interesting features, moles aren't considered desirable in most lawns and gardens as they are known for their mounds and hills that ruin lawns and trip up anyone who walks across them.

Moles create extensive underground passageways with varying depths depending on the season. These passageways are used for finding the insects, snail larvae, spiders, small vertebrates, earthworms and sometimes the vegetation they eat. Earthworms and white grubs are mole favorites.

Moles also have favorite soils. Loose, sandy loam soils are easier to move and find food in. Heavy, dry clay soils are considered undesirable habitat.

Mole damage in lawns will appear primarily as hills (tunnels) and mounds of soil. Sometimes lawns will have brown spots, but this is attributed to the root disturbance, moles are not directly feeding on grass roots. Although their movement may indirectly cause damage to vegetation, their insect feeding is considered beneficial.

When control of moles becomes necessary, it is essential to properly identify the issue. Shrews and meadow mice use mole tunnels as their own travel lanes. They will also eat insects and both are brownish grey, the same a mole. Due to similarities in appearance, it's essential to identify the mammal currently in your yard for proper control. It is a mole or is it another mammal utilizing the moles hard work?

Another mole look-a-like is the pocket gopher. These animals also create a mound of soil when they burrow, but they generally create more mounds than moles and their mounds are more spread out than the conical mole mound. The hills that the mole creates when they make their tunnels are a distinguishing feature, not even the pocket gopher creates these.

Mole control should first begin with habitat modification. Allowing your soils to dry, packing the soil with a roller and controlling the white grub population will all deter mole activity. With a reduction in food however, moles may *increase* their tunneling activity to search for more food.

Repellents are sometimes marketed for moles. No repellent has substantial research that proves their effectiveness.

Toxicants, or poisons, also have barriers to success. Although there are many substances that kill moles, it is a requirement that the mole ingests the bait. Grain

baits have few similarities to the squirming mole favorites, grubs and worms. Moles may have limited vision, but they're clever animals that require work to eradicate.

Fumigants are a toxicant that is placed in a mole tunnel and releases a toxic gas. These substances take the mole's choice to engage out of the equation. Fumigants do have varied success if they are placed only in the shallower tunnels. Getting these into the deepest burrows produces the best outcome. Most fumigants are Restricted Use Pesticides and require a licensed technician to apply.

Traps are the most successful and practical method for mole removal when properly placed. Three kinds of traps work best for moles; scissor-jawed, harpoon and nash. Each name gives you some idea as to what they do. Each of these traps is spring released, like a mouse trap.

For each trap, you must select a tunnel that is in current use, not a tunnel used by the mole for feeding, as it will likely not re-visit that area. To locate an active tunnel look along fences, the house or sidewalk for a fairly straight tunnel. Step on one portion of the tunnel to collapse it. Wait a few days and if the tunnel has been repaired, it is likely that the mole regularly uses this tunnel.

The harpoon trap has sharp spikes that impale the mole underground. To set this trap take the side of your palm, like you're karate chopping and depress a portion of the tunnel. If you use your foot or you flatten your palm, you'll likely create too large of a depression. Set the harpoon over this area. When the mole comes to repair this portion, it will trigger the trap. If the portion of soil is too wide, the trap will engage but the mole may be inches out of reach.

The scissor-jawed trap requires you to dig out a portion of the mole's tunnel and repack it around the trap. The trap should be set to straddle the runway. The bottom of the runway should be and inch above the points of the jaws. When the mole comes to repair this portion, he will be caught in the jaws of the trap. Take care to loosen the soil around the trap so the jaws can close easily and quickly.

For the choker trap you'll need to make an excavation across the tunnel. Make this hole slightly lower than the tunnel itself and only as wide as the trap. Pack soil firmly underneath the trigger-pan and set the trap so that the trigger rests on the built up soil Fill the area with loose, gravel-free soil, ensuring all light is blocked out.

If you haven't caught a mole after two days the mole may have changed it habits, the trap was improperly set or the tunnel was disturbed too much. No matter the cause the trap should be relocated.