Moles can cause destruction in the landscape

Attracting wildlife to the landscape may be a goal for some gardeners. Sitting on the porch watching the colorful birds and butterflies can be relaxing. Getting a close-up look at deer can be exciting, too.

However, there are some species that can cause problems in the landscape, including moles, which are most active in the spring and fall. Although it’s unlikely that you’ll even see them, their presence will be known. Despite the fact that moles do eat pesky insects such as grubs and earthworms, the burrows they make can be unsightly and disrupt the look of the landscape, even though the aeration of the soil can be helpful.

Moles are typically found in loose, loamy soils and their burrows are immediately below the ground and visible. These creatures can travel right underneath an established flower bed. Shallow-rooted plants will be damaged, but the damage likely won’t be detected until it’s too late to save the plant.

So, how do homeowners rid the landscape of these destructive pests? Trapping is the preferred method of control. Toxicants aren’t as effective for mole control. If tunnels are visible, it’s a sure bet moles are invading your landscape. There are traps that go directly into the burrows. Dig a hole exposing the burrow and set the trap in the burrow. To keep the hole dark, place a piece of board or tarp over the hole. If using a trap that only catches the mole from one direction, place two traps back-to-back to ensure the mole will be caught regardless of the direction it is traveling. Try not to knock soil into the burrow.

Harpoon-style traps are set over an active, visible burrow. To set the trap, remove the soil from a small section of the tunnel to find the precise location of the tunnel. Replace the soil and place the harpoon trap directly over the tunnel and set the trigger so it barely touches the soil. When the mole travels through the tunnel, it will push up the soil and trigger the trap. Both types of traps will need to be checked every day.

It's not advisable to use poisons or chemical repellents because they pose more of a threat than the moles themselves, especially with pets and children who use the landscape. They are also hazardous to the soil and surrounding area.