



Welcome to my weekly series!

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

ask the landscape professional

SEND ME YOUR QUESTIONS ... I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest. **Email or mail your questions to: info@sprigsandtwigs.net or Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335**

Linda's Question of this Week:

Last week you talked about moles. Are they the same as voles?

Linda's Answer:

Actually, moles and voles are quite distinctive. Moles are "insectivores" (not rodents), that eat insects and earthworms and ignore plants. Voles are rodents that are in the same family as rats and mice. Voles eat green vegetation, grasses, bulbs, roots and occasionally insects. Beds of Pachysandra, Myrtle or other evergreen ground covers are perfect places for voles to live (and eat). In this area, I notice most vole damage on bulbs and rose bush roots which can be effectively protected by hardwire cages around their roots.



Mole

Moles spend most of their time underground, whereas the opposite is true for voles. Moles and voles look quite different. Voles look like a mouse with a shorter tail, whereas moles have webbed feet and look like they don't have any eyes or ears.

Voles are active all year long and are prolific breeders that have several litters and can produce up to 30 young a year. Moles on the other hand, generally only have one litter of 5-7 babies a year.



Vole

There are several ways to tell if you have a moles or voles.

- On the surface, mole holes are about 2 inches in diameter and are surrounded by a pile of dirt. Vole holes are generally smaller (between 1 and 2 inches in diameter) and do not have dirt piled around them.
- Voles often have very obvious "surface runways" up to several inches wide in the surface of your lawn that go from place to place; moles have underground tunnels that run throughout the lawn. If you notice a dead plant and it has no root system when you lift it up out of the ground, you have been visited by a vole.
- In the winter time, voles often eat bark off trees leaving bare rings around the tree near the ground; moles do not.
- Voles can tunnel under snow along the surface of your lawn and eat turf grass; the damage becomes apparent when the snow melts. Since they generally only eat the above ground grass shoots, the grass regrows when the weather warms up.

One method to control voles is to use ordinary mouse traps baited with peanut butter. Place the mouse trap perpendicular to the vole runway and cover it with a protective cardboard box. Check the trap several times a day and keep trapping until you stop catching them. The easiest time of year to trap voles is late winter or fall.

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Linda K. Lillie is the President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc, the premier landscape tree care & lawn care company in SE Connecticut for the last 17 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation work.

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