

CONTROLLING GOPHERS IN THE GARDEN

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For **Home Grown New Mexico**
HomeGrownNewMexico.org

Benefits of Gophers

- Soil aeration (one gopher can move approximately one ton of soil per year).
- Soil enrichment (from decomposed underground waste and food storage).
- Attract and support wildlife who prey on gophers.
- Tunnels provide habitat, including for pollinators (bumblebees) & reptiles.

Is it a Gopher?

- Small hole diameter (2" to 4") depending on size/maturity of the animal.
- Holes are kept plugged – if the hole is open it's not a gopher.
- Fan or V shaped mound – moles leave round mounds.
- Deep burrows. Shallow tunnels just under the surface are from moles.

What Does NOT Work:

- Noisemakers (quickly become accustomed, then it's just dinner music).
- Repellents (herbs, sprays, castor oil, urine) – quickly fades or washes away.
- Flooding with a hose. Rapid flooding with bucket *sometimes* works.
- Poison – too many unintended victims (poisoned pets, wildlife and soil).

Partially Effective:

- Plant a perimeter of daffodils – gophers do not like them.
- Dogs & cats can be encouraged to hunt gophers.
- Encourage natural predators (coyotes, hawks, snakes, weasels & skunks).
- Smoke bombs – tunnel may be too extensive. Hard to tell if you “got it.”

What DOES Work:

Underground Fences (non-lethal)

- About 90% effective – but will eventually be breached.
- Use 1/4" x 36" or 48" hardware cloth for longevity, not chicken wire.
- Use galvanized or rust proof with ant-rust paint.
- Staple underneath raised beds or bury 18" to 24" around perimeter of garden area.

- “L” shaped wire buried underground, pointing away from the garden.
- Labor intensive (24” trench) & expensive ~ about \$45 per 25 ft roll of hardware cloth.
- Make wire baskets to protect root ball when planting trees & shrubs.

Trapping (lethal)

- No live trap is practical and relocation is probably illegal.
- Trapping will knock down a high population to manageable levels.
- Need long screwdriver or weeder, a thin bladed trowel, anchor stakes, plus traps.
- Various traps available from hardware stores.
- The “Gophinator” trap from TrapLineProducts.com or Amazon.com
- Search “Gophinator” on YouTube for videos on proper usage.
- Probe with screwdriver to locate tunnel. Tool will “give” when tunnel is penetrated.
- Carefully excavate the tunnel, widen it to accommodate trap and open it up to air.
- Set the trap as far in to the tunnel as possible. A “Sprung” trap full of dirt was not deep enough.
- Often the tunnel will branch in two directions and two traps are needed, one in each direction.
- Use a wire leader attached to the trap and staked to the ground outside the hole. Otherwise you are likely to lose traps dragged underground.
- Trap in fresh, active holes only – look for newly excavated, moist soil and the “plug” around the tunnel entrance. Open holes are not active.
- No bait is needed if the hole is open – the gopher will not tolerate an open hole & will be along soon to plug it.
- If no success within 24 hours, move on. The gopher already has.
- Release the spring on the trap to free the carcass, then bury it.
- With a little practice, you will not need to touch the carcass. Nevertheless, gophers are not know to carry any disease affecting humans.