



Dew Worms

Dew worms or night crawlers are common names for a species of earthworm that is active at night but also surface and crawl about during wet or rainy weather. They often leave casts on the surface which make lawns bumpy and uneven. Dew worms are more common on older, shaded or heavily watered lawns.

EARTHWORMS OR DEW WORMS

Earthworms or dew worms are extremely valuable in creating topsoil and maintaining soil fertility. Earthworm castings, or excrement, are richer in minerals than the soil which the earthworm has swallowed.

The earthworm constructs its burrow by forcing its front end through crevices and swallowing soil. The eaten soil and mucus mixture is removed from the burrow as castings. During dry seasons or during the winter, earthworms migrate to deeper levels of the soil.

Earthworms are scavengers and feed on dead organic matter at the surface of the soil and may pull leaves into their burrows. They will also feed on organic matter obtained from the soil that is swallowed during their burrowing. They are most common in moist soil rich in organic matter, or with at least a layer of humus or thatch on the surface.

Young worms and small species are usually found in the top few inches of the soil, while others will have a wider distribution but are still limited to the upper level of the soil that contains some organic matter. The tunnels of larger species, such as dew worm or night crawlers, range from the surface to several metres in depth, depending on the soil.



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CONTROL

Earthworms or dew worms are often noticed because of the castings they leave on the lawn. There are a number of things which can be done to remove the bumps and reduce their appearance.



Cultural Control

Remove and reduce the thatch later with core aeration. Leave the cores on the surface to allow the soil organisms in the cores to break down the thatch from the top.

Use gypsum (calcium sulphate) to help break down the castings before raking the lawn.

Collect and compost the clippings from the lawn. The compost can be used to top dress the lawn or flower beds.

Thin layers of sand can be applied over the entire lawn; the sand irritates the body of the dew worm.

Maintain an even and deep soil moisture. Apply 2.5 cm (1 inch) of water every 7 to 10 days. Avoid watering in the evening and for long periods of time.

Chemical Control

Sevin can be applied to the lawn; ensure lawn is well watered prior to applying Sevin.



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