

A MOLE IN SADIE JOHNSON'S GARDEN

The official definition: Mole—any of various small, insectivorous mammals of the family Talpidae. The gardener's definition: Mole—a royal pain.

Rarely will you find a garden not afflicted with this bane of horticultural idealism. Sadie Johnson's garden was no exception. Just as hopeful seedlings, in carefully prepared rows, bend toward the heavens above, along comes the unrepentant creature making his own rows, usually in cross direction, taking numerous seedling casualties in the process.

On one particular spring day, as Sadie grimly repaired the damage done by the uninvited visitor, she had a face-to-face encounter with the underground menace. Sadie, with her glasses resting on the end of her nose, and the mole, with his rudimentary eyes, stared at each other in a mock contest of who would blink first.

Finally, Sadie said, "Mole, let's have a talk."

“Fine with me,” replied the mole in a squeaky voice.

“Mole, I have a proposition for you,” stated the gardener. “Are you interested?”

“What did you have in mind?” inquired the mole.

And thus began an hour of negotiation between the gardener and the mole. There were periods of intense dialogue coupled with more sedate moments of give and take. At last, a contract emerged, the first of its kind as far as anyone around knew. Sadie would provide a twenty foot by twenty-foot corner of the garden for the mole. She placed every insect that she could dig up in the rest of the garden into the square that the mole occupied. In exchange for this free board and lodging, the mole would agree not to venture into the rest of Sadie’s garden.

As the season wore on, the deal appeared to be a win-win for both parties. Sadie harvested a record crop from her garden, and she didn’t have the aggravation and expense of dealing with the mole. The mole had his needs satisfied without mining around all day in the dirt, constantly hitting his head on buried rocks. In fact, things were so

good for the mole that word soon reached other moles in the area and his plot became crowded with an onslaught of visitors. This development endeared Sadie to every other gardener around, as their gardens were now rid of moles; however, it left the mole with little choice but to go back to Sadie and try to renegotiate the contract. Sadie agreed to a compromise that involved the construction of living quarters that rose four stories along the path where the bulk of the moles traveled. Since this population influx came about largely by word of mouth, with one mole telling another down the line about the luxurious accommodations, the mole and Sadie agreed to give the complex a name—‘Moletell’. Although some in higher academic circles may disagree, country folks know that ‘Moletell’ was eventually shortened to the word ‘motel’.

Sadly, an unforeseen problem developed in Moletell. The moles began to get fat, what with all that free food and the lack of digging exercise. And a bunch of fat moles lying out in the sun at poolside soon became easy pickings for birds of prey and local bobcats. Over the months, Sadie came to have affection for the now depressed mole. She agreed to plow up the original plot, erasing all memories

of it for the mole. She gave him a smaller plot at the other end of the garden with a narrow extension running one hundred feet out that served as an exercise course for his digging. They both promised not to tell anyone about the new plot.

So, while Moletell was conceived with fair and equitable thought, it simply didn't work out. Sometimes failure in one venture can give rise to success in another. Now, Sadie had a son by the name of Howard, and Howard Johnson's ... well, another story for another time.

For the rest of her life, Sadie Johnson continued innovating and adapting to whatever life gave to her. Her out-of-the-box thinking changed many a neighbor's approach to living in harmony with the rest of God's marvelous creation. Though she has long since passed away, her inspiration lives on as a light on the hill in ways far beyond the garden into the realm of humanity itself. Nevertheless, she is most always remembered when the first mole track is spotted each spring in the garden.

