

## A Dog-friendly Yard (for yard-friendly dogs)

It can be a challenge to have a yard that's perfect for you as well as for your dog. The primary goals are often at odds... a place to run and dig versus the somewhat fragile beauty of seasonal plants. But with a little bit of thoughtful planning, there are ways to accommodate both.

Like us, dogs want both places to sun themselves and shady places to retreat during summer heat. Having decks, arbors, patios and other hardscaping in both sunny and shady areas can keep owners and their pets happily together.

Pathways also serve both human and canine purposes. If your dog has already beaten down a particular path, it's easiest to work with that rather than trying to force a different route. Dogs like to patrol and protect the property line, so pathways 2-3 foot wide along the property's edges allow them to "do their job," in a number of different ways. With good plant selection, these paths can remain somewhat hidden. Stepping stones, gravel and wood chips or mulch can handle the traffic but avoid cocoa mulch, which can be poisonous to dogs. Dogs intent on escape may require fencing with underground barriers like chicken wire, rebar or other constraints.

Planted areas require a little more protection and forethought. Raised beds and mounds will generally keep pets out. A rock edging or low fencing can also help keep them out of planted areas.

Tougher plants like ornamental grasses and dense, low shrubs can create barriers to protect plants around and behind them. Plants may have to be purchased in larger sizes to protect them until they get more established.

Access to food and water is important, possibly by installing dog doors so food sources remain inside where raccoons, opossums and other animals can't get to them. Some dogs might like access to a water feature where they can cool off on especially hot days, but that can be a bigger-ticket item that will require space and effort to manage.

### **Plants and Management**

- Limit the use of fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides or use the safest organic options. Pesticides have been linked to a 70 percent higher incidence of canine malignant lymphoma.
- Some of the best plants to reduce fleas are herbs like lavender, rosemary and mint.
- Most herbs also discourage or are resistant to dog urine, along with grasses like feather reed grass, shrubs like dogwood and viburnum and groundcovers like ajuga, snow-in-summer and sedum.
- Poisonous plants to avoid include lily, anemone, daffodil, chrysanthemum, foxglove, iris, monkshood, tobacco plant, lily of the valley and many others.
- To avoid yellow and brown spots on turf or other plants, some homeowners install "dog potty areas" with gravel, sand, soil, artificial grass or a screen for easier pickup.

