



Creating a Dog-Friendly BACKYARD



Letting your dog have a free romp around your yard or garden keeps him exercised, active and happy. However, dogs that are kept in a bland backyard or garden all day are far more likely to misbehave. These tips from Bark Busters will help for making your yard or garden more comfortable and appealing to your dog.

Poisonous Ingestibles

Dogs that are bored or hungry will be tempted to eat poisonous plants and flowers or mulch, which can be toxic or splinter in their mouths or stomachs. Ask your vet for a list of poisonous plants. Avoid gardening with your dog present—he may conclude that playing with plants and digging are acceptable activities. Also put away dangerous products like lawn chemicals, fertilisers, weed killers, antifreeze, pesticides and outdoor grilling supplies like charcoal and lighter fluid.

Chewing

Dogs chew for various reasons, such as stress, boredom, teething or diet deficiency. The easiest way to stop your dog from chewing is to apply a bitter tasting product such as Bitter Apple Spray, citronella or hot chili sauce to it. Give your dog an alternative and keep him entertained by providing high-quality puzzle toys that reward him with treats, such as the Buster® Cube and KONG® products. Every few days, rotate what toys are available to him.

Water

Be sure the yard includes a large water bowl filled with clean fresh water each day. If you choose to incorporate a water feature such as a small pond, be sure it circulates water to help avoid insects. Still-water ponds need harmful chemical additives to kill the larvae that will grow there.

Shade

While being outside can make for a happy dog, being stuck in the blazing sun is dangerous. Create a cool spot for your pooch by scraping an indented area in a shady place where he can relax in comfort—otherwise, your dog may create his own spot in an area not of your choosing.



Digging

Dogs can dig in search of food, to investigate sounds and smells, to improve their shelter, or to escape. Digging can be triggered by boredom, separation anxiety, chasing rodents or bugs and/or a nutritional deficiency. A qualified dog behavioural therapist such as a Bark Busters trainer can help you determine the reason for your dog's digging, so that a possible training solution can be put in to place.



Scratching at the Back Door

A dog can scratch at the back door because all the good, fun stuff is kept inside—including you! Consider giving your dog a bone or scatter food when you put him outside. Scatter food appeals to a dog's natural instinct to forage. Scatter bits of raw vegetables, dog kibble, and other foods that won't attract wasps around the yard when you leave. Try hiding a few treats so your dog spends extra time looking for them.

If your dog scratches at the door and cries to come in, ignore him. Let him in only when he stops. By letting him in when he cries will encourage him to do it even more.

Fences and Gates

A fence helps to keep your dog safely on your property and out of harm's way. If your yard has a traditional fence (chain link or wood), be sure all gates latch correctly each time they are closed. If there are any holes, repair them so that he cannot eascape.

Because some housing associations do not allow traditional fences, a popular alternative is the electronic or "invisible" dog fence. Bark Busters does not recommend the use of this type of fence. There is no substitute for a good strong fence. It is important to ensure that your dog is secure in your yard or garden.

Maintaining the Yard

Maintain your yard's cleanliness by regularly picking up after your dog. Some dogs can be trained to use one area for toileting. While the nitrogen in dog urine can be very hard on lawns, watering the area after the dog has urinated can help to minimise damage.

Keep your dog (and anyone else) off the lawn after any yard treatments—fertilisers, herbicides or insecticides—until the chemicals have dried completely. Also be careful of lawn edging, which could seriously cut his paws.

Kennels

Dogs are more relaxed when they are covered and in familiar surroundings. Place the kennel next to your family's house so that your dog feels like it is an extension of the larger "den." Provide a blanket or other comfy bedding. Choose a house made of a naturally rot-resistant material such as plastic or red cedar, but do not use pressure-treated wood, which can contain arsenic. Use rustproof, galvanised nails and screws.

The house should be raised from the ground to insulate the dog from moisture and chills, and should be large enough for him to comfortably turn around but small enough to retain his body heat. In colder climates, your dog may appreciate a heated kennel.

Training your dog will keep him mentally stimulated and help to decrease his overall level of stress. A dog behavioural therapist can help you discover the source of the reasons for your dog's outdoor misbehaviours and can provide ways to correct the problems. Your dog and your family will be happier for it!

