

THE DOG-SCAPED YARD

Backyard havens for the collared set

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Look into any backyard and you can probably tell which one has a dog. Trampled pathways through grass and garden bear evidence of daily squirrel patrols. Muddy trails along fences underscore an intense curiosity about other-side happenings. And freshly dug pits may highlight a hankering for underground critters, a cool earthen bed, or just old-fashioned fun.

Let's face it: Dogs are uniquely skilled at uncoiffing our landscapes. But "don't take it personal," advises Colorado-based landscape designer Elizabeth Bublitz, author of *Pawfriendly Landscapes*. As someone who's spent more than a decade designing yards for dogs and owners, Bublitz knows that human's best friends are merely seeking to burn off energy, protect their territory, and track down interesting smells.

The following tips from "petscaping" experts will help you create an outdoor space that fulfills your dog's needs and your desire for an aesthetically pleasing yard. If you're strapped for cash or time, remember that picking even one project to start with will help you and your companion delight in your outdoor domain.

LOUNGE HOUNDS

In addition to shelter from wind and rain, places to sun are a must-have for the dog-scaped yard. Just ask California-based landscape designer Scott Cohen, who says he can tell the time of day by where his elderly bulldog, Belvedere, happens to be basking. Shady spots are equally important—and can deter your pooch from digging troughs in the dirt. Garden features like trellises, patio covers, and sail shades make attractive cooling zones. Native trees offer natural cover; deciduous species allow both summer shade and winter sun. In Michigan, master gardener Tom Barthel built a covered deck to provide his rescued Labradoodle, Dakota, with both shade and an elevated place to scan his domain. In hardscapes such

as cemented areas, moveable umbrellas and built-in holders make for interchangeable sun/shade zones.

Chances are your dog already has some favorite spots for power lounging—ones that also enable her to survey her territory. Outdoor chair padding and dog beds can make these places even more enjoyable.

NECTAR OF THE DOGS

Whether enjoyed as a refreshing sip or cooling plunge, H₂O is an essential element in any dog's backyard. To make sure his dogs never go thirsty, Tucson landscape designer Jason Isenberg installed a self-circulating, self-filling water feature. A bacteria-killing UV filter keeps the water sparkling clean while the fountain's sleek, modern lines create an attractive focal point. For Belvedere and his other dog, Lucy, Cohen installed two auto-fill fountains in his yard: a small one for the dog run and a decorative three-tier fountain in the main area. "They like to drink from the bottom tier and run around in the water when it's hot," says Cohen.

Other thirst-quenching elements include ponds, self-circulating waterfalls, sprinklers with timers, and even kiddie pools. (Make sure animals have an easy exit and the water is free of harmful chemicals.)



RUFFAGE

Most pet owners have observed their dogs munching grass. Though the jury is still out on why, we know that most dogs are

perpetually on the hunt for anything remotely edible. You can satisfy these grazing instincts by planting a special garden filled with healthy, tasty plants.

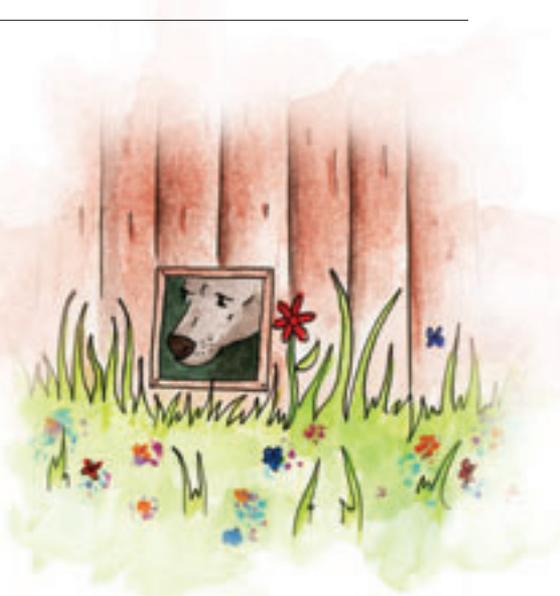
For grass eaters, wheat and oat grasses are good choices, Barthel says. Edible flowers such as pansy, nasturtium, marigold, and rose hips are rich in antioxidants and citric acid. Fruits and vegetables such as blueberries, raspberries, and carrots can also rouse a dog's salivary glands. Young dandelion buds taste sweet and are a great source of vitamins and minerals. Lavender is another natural treat. "It tastes really good to dogs, and it's drought-tolerant and easy to grow," says California-based animal trainer Carolyn Doherty. "Dogs also smell good when they run through it."

ON GUARD

Dogs are creatures of habit who were born to patrol—a destructive combination when it comes to backyard vegetation. You can direct your dogs' natural tendencies through purposeful pathways: flagstones stepping toward a garden bench, river rock guiding the way toward a creek or pond. For a more artistic look, line paths with colorful shrubs or landscaping material. But be sure to use paw-friendly materials that can withstand a lot of foot traffic, advises Cohen, who uses decomposed granite between his lawn and planters.

Rather than deter his dog from trampling the grass and vegetable plants along his fence line, Barthel—author of *Dogscaping: Creating the Perfect Backyard & Garden for You and Your Dog*—decided to wave the white flag. He laid a 12-inch-wide swath of mulch for Dakota to use as a runway and moved his garden into 6-inch raised beds away from the fence.

To entice your pet to explore the paths you create, Doherty—who with Cohen authored *Petscaping: Training and Landscaping with Your Pet in Mind*—suggests hiding treats along the way and providing other enticements. For her rescued Doberman, Chief, Doherty placed various-sized boulders to serve as survey points, encourage exercise, and even keep his nails trimmed.



For Bublitz's German shepherd mix, Barney, peekaboo windows cut into her 6-foot privacy fence ease the frustration of not being able to see what's happening on the other side, while 3½-foot-high berms provide survey points. Half-walls throughout Isenberg's backyard attractively compartmentalize his outdoor living space and serve as lookout platforms. A row of salvia along one wall (a favorite sniffing zone) keeps dogs Buddy and Zora smelling sweet.

HOT DIGGITY DOG

For dirt lovers, a designated dig zone can keep your yard from resembling a crater-pocked moonscape. Isenberg selected a shady area with a panorama of the backyard, then dug 18 inches into hard desert soil. He filled the pit with playground sand and added an angular border of charcoal-colored Mexican beach stone to match his backyard motif. Now the dig pit is his dogs' go-to spot on sizzling days. Buddy and Zora scrape off several inches of sand before wedging their bellies into the cool, moist underlayer.

LIVE AND LET LIVE

A dog-scaped yard can still be a sanctuary for untamed creatures. To keep your wild neighbors out of harm's way, create hiding places and escape routes throughout your landscape: brush piles, rotting logs, rock gardens, trees, and thick bushes. Place bird feeders somewhere inaccessible to your pet.