



Gardens and digging

Why do dogs dig?

- Dogs dig to bury bones, and later to dig them up again.
- Dogs dig cooling hollows in the summer.
- Dogs dig to flush out prey or dig for rodents.
- Bitches dig dens when they are pregnant.
- Dogs dig out of boredom.
- Dogs dig to escape.
- But by and large, most dogs dig for the sheer fun of it.

Dogs consider digging to be a perfectly normal and natural doggy activity. In fact, terriers consider digging to be their very reason for being. Prevention and treatment of misplaced digging focus on management and education: preventing your dog from digging in inappropriate areas and redirecting your dog's natural digging-desire to a suitable area.

Prevent Digging in Your Absence

When you are away from home, keep your dog indoors. When you are at home, try your best to accompany your dog outdoors to supervise and teach garden rules. If you provide your dog with regular walks, runs, play-time and training, the chances are you will not have a digging problem. But until your dog has been taught that digging up your garden is unacceptable, he should not be given free access to these areas when you are not there to supervise him.

Some dogs dig to escape because they cannot bear the boredom and anxiety of solitary confinement in the yard. Escaping is exceedingly dangerous for your dog's health. So if you have to leave your dog in the garden, make it more interesting and be sure to fix the fence. Also make sure your dog has a cool resting place in the summer and warmth in the winter. Teach your dog to dissipate digging energy with other activities. Make sure your dog is well exercised (psychologically as well as physically) and entertained, and thus has no need to dig to escape from the yard. Teach recreational diggers to become recreational chewers. If your dog is busying himself with a chewtoy, he has little time to dig.

If you consider your dog's choice of digging locations to be inappropriate, choose a location to your liking and teach your dog to dig there. Build your dog a digging pit (much like a child's sandbox) in a suitable corner of the yard. Bury really exciting things (such as a bone, or stuffed chewtoys) in your dog's digging pit and encourage him to dig for them. After finding something really rewarding, your dog will discover that the digging pit is a virtual treasure trove where he can find toys for sustenance and entertainment.

Once the dog's digging activities have been redirected to a suitable location, you might want to protect other parts of the garden. You can lay down chicken wire or chain-link fencing over the lawn and flower beds, add plenty of topsoil, and reseed.

Garden Rules

Use boundary fences to partition the garden into doggy and non-doggy zones. The fences are not meant to be dog proof; rather, they are used as training aids to clearly demarcate lawn and garden boundaries to help you teach the rules. Always accompany your dog when he goes outside, especially during puppyhood or the first few months an older dog is at home.

It is not fair to keep garden rules a secret from your dog and then get angry with the dog for breaking rules he didn't even know existed. Encourage and praise your dog for walking on paths and for lying down in dog zones. Tie a number of stuffed chewtoys to ground stakes or hang them from tree branches in dog zones to encourage your dog to want to spend time in those areas. Discourage your dog from entering non-doggy zones.