

## at Home

# Make your yard pet-friendly

Keep dogs and cats safe, entertained with enclosures, water features, potty spots

By Kimberly Matas

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You've spent serious cash installing irrigation and babying bougainvilleas, but the dogs keep undoing your hard work.

Landscapers and veterinarians have suggestions for people who want to keep their pets safe and their yards intact.

Cutler Landscaping installs a lot of fenced enclosures designed to keep out predators, said owner Paul Cutler. The company also designs yards with nontoxic plants, water features for dogs and designated digging areas. They've even incorporated fake fire hydrants into a design for clients who wanted more whimsical landscaping.



"If their pets like to chew on things, we don't put any poisonous plants in the yards. And if the dogs like to dig, we'll bury the irrigation system a little deeper than normal," he said.

Landscape designer Renee Schaefer helped several clients incorporate pet-friendly features into their yards when she worked for Cutler Landscaping. She now has her own company, Outside View Design Inc.



Schaefer recommends giving dogs a space in the yard, set away from the house, where they are allowed to dig and take bathroom breaks. The area can be screened by plants to keep it out of view.

Including shade plants and water features that dogs can drink from or play in are also important, Schaefer said.

Schaefer designed a dog run at Liz and Thomas Redman's new home, with a water feature for the dogs and raised gardening beds so the couple's three pooches wouldn't run through the more fragile plants and trample them. Queen palms line a brick patio so dogs can catch some rays or nap in the shade, Liz Redman said.



When Patrick and Cheryl Murray moved with their two golden retrievers from lush California to dry Oro Valley, they wanted a backyard that would help their dogs adjust to a desert environment. They hired Cutler Landscaping to build a waterfall and small pool for their water-happy pup Cooper.

At each stage of the waterfall's construction, workers let Cooper test it out for size to make sure the pool was large enough for him to lie in.

"It really was designed for Cooper," Cheryl Murray said. "It was something he could get in and play in and get out."



Yard designs aren't just for dogs, either. Larry Casoni incorporated a den into his landscaping for his desert tortoise and his box turtle.

"It's in one of the mounds they put in the back yard," he said. "We had cinder blocks put down into the mound, and then across the top of it put a piece of metal to hold it up, then dirt and gravel over the top."

The front is trimmed with flagstone, plants and boulders to hide any of the metal roof that is exposed.

When choosing a landscaper to create a pet-friendly yard, owners should give their designer a list of toxic plants and insist that none are used in the layout, said veterinarian Tony Knight, professor of clinical sciences at Colorado State University and co-author of "A Guide to Plant Poisoning of Animals in North America" (Teton NewMedia, \$60).

However, using nontoxic plants doesn't end the danger to pets. Fertilizers, pesticides and plant foods used in maintaining yards and gardens could prove poisonous as well.

To be safe, owners should make sure gardening products do not get into the dog's water supply or on their coats or feet, Knight said. Owners should immediately sweep up any fertilizer granules that spill on patios and wet down granules sprinkled into flower beds to ensure the dog doesn't lick them up.

Veterinarian Lisa Shubitz with the University of Arizona Department of Veterinary Science and Microbiology and the Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson, warns pet owners to read labels before using products. Most packaging now contains warnings for humans and animals.

Symptoms of poisoning from plants or fertilizers and pesticides can include vomiting, diarrhea, colic, excessive thirst and, in severe cases, convulsions, muscle tremors and salivating, Knight said.

Some of the worst plants, said veterinarian Jinni Sinnott with Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson include oleander, lantana, castor beans and mesquite beans.

"Even if the dog seems fine, bring them in, because you usually only have an hour or two to get the toxin out of their stomach after they eat it," she said.



#### » Toxic plant trouble

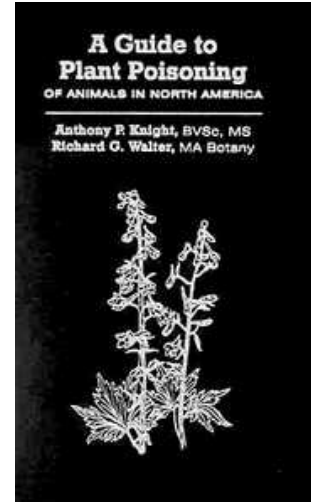
If you suspect a pet has eaten toxic plants or products, immediately take the pet and the product packaging to a vet.

Jinni Sinnott, with the Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson, suggests calling the Animal Poison Control Center operated by the nonprofit American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals at 1-888-426-4435. The service is available 24 hours a day and costs \$55.

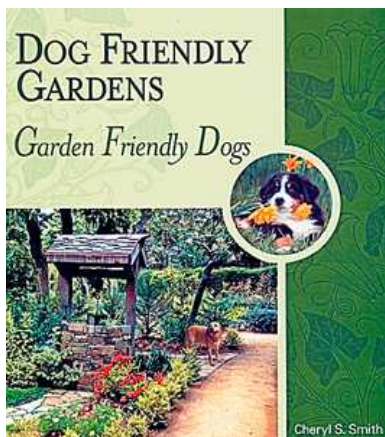
Callers will speak with veterinarians, who will evaluate the situation to determine if the animal needs immediate emergency care. If the pet is taken to an animal hospital, the Poison Control veterinary toxicologist will guide the local doctor in treating the animal for the specific poison.

## Toxic or dangerous plants to avoid

- Agave
- Allamanda
- Aloe
- Angel's trumpet
- Avocado
- Black walnut
- Boxwood
- Buckeye, horse chestnut
- Bushman's poison
- Carolina Jessamine
- Castor bean
- Cestrum, jasmine
- Chinaberry
- Clematis
- Coral bean
- Cycad, sago palm
- Desert rose
- Dracaena, corn plant
- Euphorbias, spurges
- Fish tail palm
- Four o'clocks
- Golden shower tree
- Heavenly bamboo
- Honeysuckle
- Jade plant
- Kalanchoe
- Kentucky coffee tree
- Laurel
- Locust tree
- Loquat
- Macadamia nut
- Melaleuca
- Mescal bean
- Oleander
- Peacock flower
- Rhododendron, azalea
- Rubber vine
- Sacred datura, Jimson weed
- Slipper flower
- Tobacco
- Tung nut
- Virginia creeper
- Yesterday-today-tomorrow



• Provided by veterinarian Tony Knight, professor of clinical sciences at Colorado State University and co-author of "A Guide to Plant Poisoning of Animals in North America" (Teton NewMedia, \$60).



"Dog Friendly Gardens, Garden Friendly Dogs" (Dogwise Publishing, \$19.95) suggests that owners observe their pets' habits before deciding on a landscape design. The book includes information about garden materials, dog-hardy plants and ways to train dogs to dig and take potty breaks in designated areas.

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