

# secrets for a pet-friendly garden

**Mixing pets and plants doesn't have to be frustrating. Here's how to create a garden you and your pets will love.**

Is it possible to be a happy pet owner and gardener at the same time? Absolutely. With a little effort, you can create an attractive garden that welcomes pets without letting them destroy all your hard work. Here are six ways to build a garden that's safe for your cats and dogs.

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## 1. design right

Save yourself work by designing your garden with your pet in mind. Has your dog already created a well-worn path in the grass? Then create a permanent path there. Avoid dirt paths, which become muddy when wet. Instead, use flagstones or pavers set in small pebbles.

Give pets their own places to play outside, too. A long winding path, for example, gives your dog a place to run around and get daily exercise. Make the dog run at least 3 feet wide, and avoid planting any thorny or sharp-edged plants nearby. Create some comfy spaces for cats and dogs to lie in the sun, and make sure you have some shady spots (a dog house, or a flat slab of stone under a tree) where your pets can retreat when they're hot.

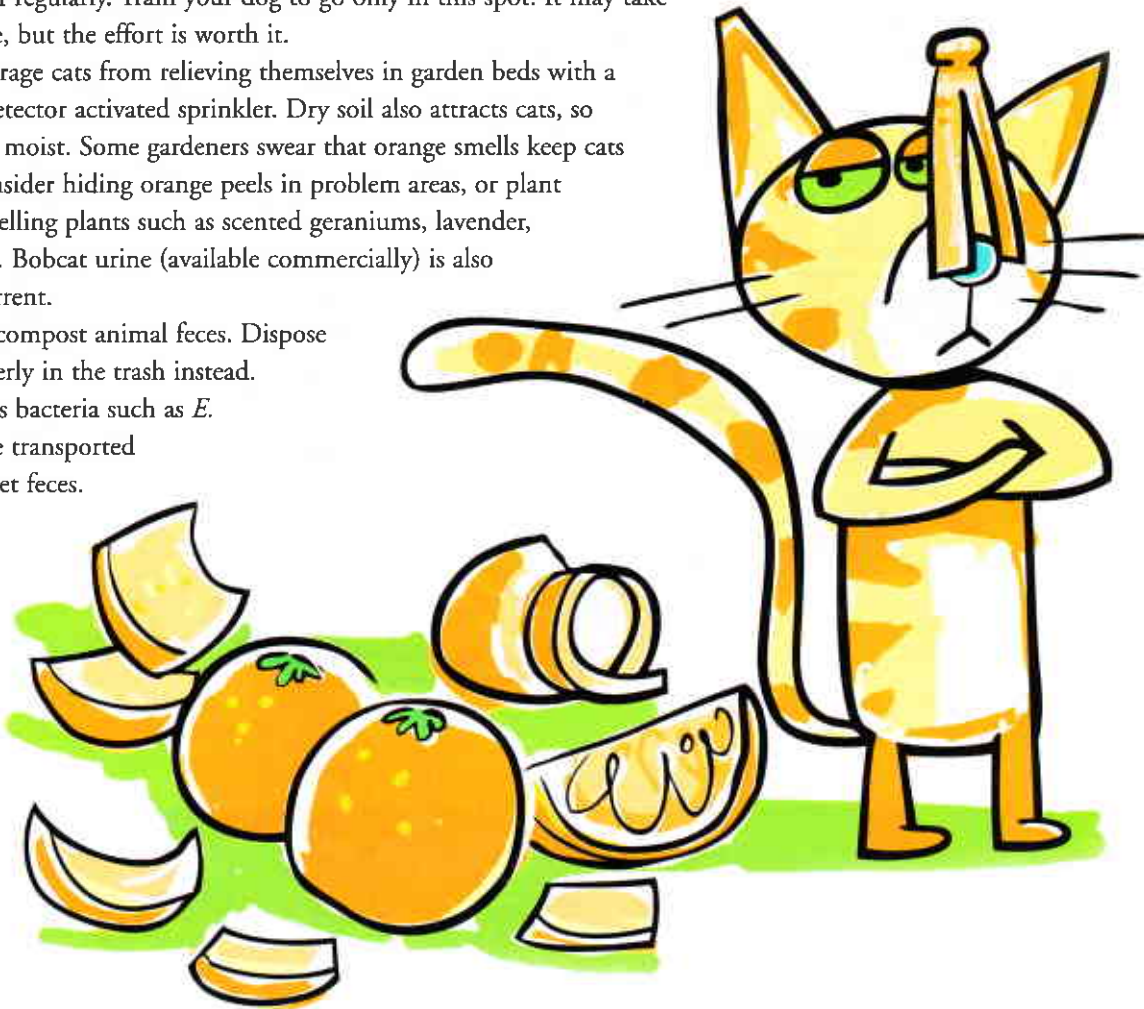


## 2. allow nature's call

Your dogs and outdoor cats need places to relieve themselves outside, but there's no reason it has to be your prized perennial beds or lawn. When dogs urinate in the same spot, the high salt levels in the urine cause brown spots in the turf. (It's a common misconception that the acidity in urine is what kills grass; home remedies like feeding your dog tomato juice to "neutralize" urine don't work and may be unhealthy for your dog.) Hose down these spots every few days to dilute the salts. Or better yet, create a separate area for your dog to relieve himself. Make this area easy to clean, and cover with pea gravel or fine cedar chips that can be washed off regularly. Train your dog to go only in this spot. It may take some time, but the effort is worth it.

Discourage cats from relieving themselves in garden beds with a motion-detector activated sprinkler. Dry soil also attracts cats, so keep beds moist. Some gardeners swear that orange smells keep cats away. Consider hiding orange peels in problem areas, or plant strong-smelling plants such as scented geraniums, lavender, and garlic. Bobcat urine (available commercially) is also a cat deterrent.

Never compost animal feces. Dispose of it properly in the trash instead. Dangerous bacteria such as *E. coli* can be transported through pet feces.



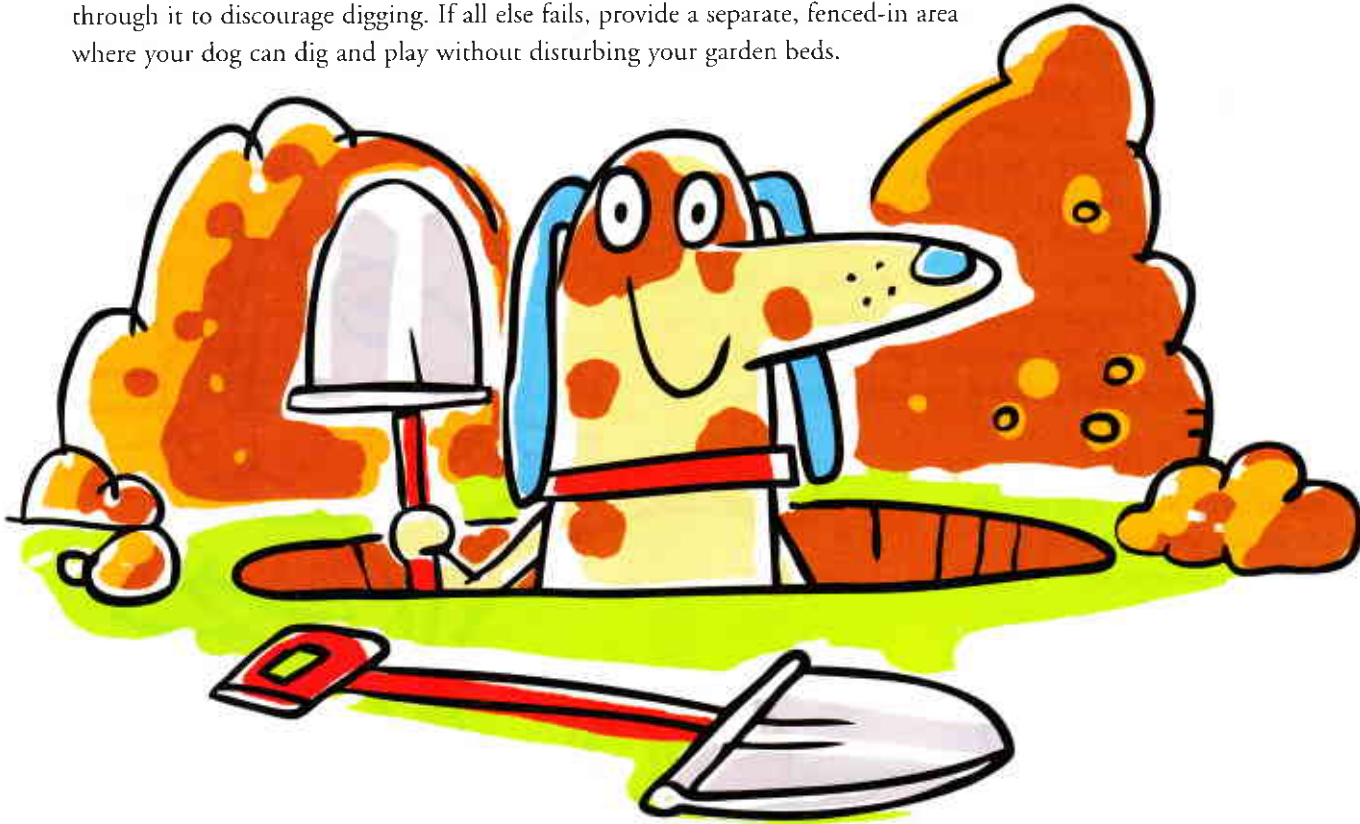
## 3. grow safe plants

Unfortunately, there are hundreds of plants that are harmful to dogs and cats. Foxglove, castor beans, calla lilies, rhubarb, daylilies, and coleus are just some of the 700 plants that can cause problems ranging from nausea to kidney failure to death.

If you think your pet has ingested a poisonous plant, call your local veterinarian or the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' 24-hour emergency hotline at 888-426-4435. (See sidebar on page 30 for a list of potentially poisonous plants for cats and dogs.)

## 4. discourage digging

Some dog breeds are more likely to dig in your garden than others. If you have a digger, avoid large bare areas, which encourage digging. Dogs prefer to dig in dry dirt, so keep soil moist. Lay a sheet of chicken wire over soil and grow plants up through it to discourage digging. If all else fails, provide a separate, fenced-in area where your dog can dig and play without disturbing your garden beds.



### poisonous plants for pets

These plants are toxic—and, in some cases, lethal—for dogs or cats. Either remove them from your garden or put them in containers or fenced areas that are inaccessible to your pets. For more details on which plants are poisonous to which pets, see Resource Guide on page 64.

- Plants in the *Amaryllis* genus, including belladonna lily, naked lady, and St. Joseph lily
- Apple and crabapples (*Malus* spp.)
- Baby's breath (*Gypsophila elegans*)
- Bird of paradise (both *Caesalpinia gilliesii* and *Strelitzia reginae*)
- Buckwheat (*Fagopyrum* spp.)
- Buttercup (*Ranunculus* spp.)
- Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobilis*)
- Cherry, almond, nectarine, peach, and plum (*Prunus* spp.)
- Kalanchoe (*Kalanchoe* spp.)
- Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*)
- Morning glory (*Ipomoea* spp.)
- Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*)

## 5. protect gardens

Instead of constantly chasing cats and dogs out of your favorite flower bed, make it difficult for your pets to disturb your plants in the first place. Window boxes and hanging baskets protect plants from pets, as do raised beds with attractive fencing around them. Densely planted garden beds discourage dogs from running through plantings. Most will run around them instead. Ornamental grasses tend to be particularly dog resistant; use them to protect more fragile plants. Many gardeners swear coyote and wolf urine are good deterrents for dogs. Buy these products online, at specialty nurseries, and at home and garden centers.

## 6. think safety and security

Some dogs are escape artists, so don't forget about fencing. Make sure your garden has a solid fence at least 4 feet tall; more athletic dog breeds will need a fence 5 to 6 feet tall. Does the gate latch properly, or can it be pushed open? Are there gaps in the fence where your dog could squeeze through? If you have a dog that likes to dig under fences, consider an electric fence for added security.

Many common gardening remedies are toxic to pets. Slug pellets, rodent traps, and pond treatments are just some of the poisonous substances that may be in your garage or garden shed; be sure to keep these items stored safely away from dogs and cats. For the same reason, don't use pesticides and fungicides in a garden where pets roam. Citronella plants aren't toxic, but citronella candles have oils that can harm dogs' digestive systems.

Cocoa mulch, with its attractive chocolate smell, also poses serious risks to dogs. According to ASPCA research, low doses can cause gastrointestinal problems; higher doses can lead to muscle tremors, seizures, and death. If you have pets in your garden, use another type of organic mulch, such as pine needles or cedar chips. 🌱



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### WebExtra

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