



Backyard Pawbook

All it takes to keep Fido safe in the backyard is common sense and a little bit of effort.

By Melanie Monteiro



tipbit



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The backyard may seem like the friendliest place on Earth for Fido, but even the friendliest places can hold hidden dangers. Before you let Fido roam freely between the fences, take some time to ferret out the bad from the good.

FROM CHAPTER 4 OF *The Safe Dog Handbook: A Complete Guide to Protecting Your Pooch, Indoors and Out* © 2009 AMERICAN

Fencing

The primary goal of fencing is to safely contain the dog on your property to prevent her from escaping, becoming lost, being hit by a car or getting otherwise injured. Wood, iron, chain link, vinyl—it doesn't matter what the fence is made of, as long as it prevents the dog from squeezing through, digging under, jumping over or being injured by gaps or sharp edges.

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COMMON TOXIC PLANTS IN YOUR BACKYARD

- Azalea
- Castor Bean
- Cyclamen
- Dumb Cane
- Foxglove
- Kalanchoe
- Oleander
- Rhodie
- Sago Palm
- Yew

Keeping Safe in the Great Outdoors

Dogs love venturing outdoors, and for good reason—there's no better place to stretch those legs, smell the roses (and other less-than-rosy smelling things) and enjoy a satisfying romp with their favorite people and playmates. A dog's curiosity is heightened by the ever-changing sights and smells outside—even in their own backyard, where harmful garden products, chemicals, toxic plants and other hazards are sometimes found.

Backyard Safety

All backyards are different, each has its own unique requirements for becoming a dog-safe retreat. Even a very small space with no greenery must be properly fenced, have no raised decks or balconies a dog or puppy could fall from and offer adequate protection from the elements.

Once you've defined the space your dog will have access to, you'll need to make it comfortable and free from dangerous plants, pests and chemicals, as well as physical and weather-related hazards.

Toxic Plants & Other Garden Hazards

More than 100 plants are known to be toxic to pets. Fortunately, not all of them are likely to be in your garden; most of them taste pretty bad, and most won't cause serious problems unless significant quantities are ingested. That

said, some common backyard plants are so highly toxic they can harm a dog in small quantities, such as sago palm, oleander, foxglove and castor bean. What's more, there are no legal requirements to disclose this information at the point of purchase, so little information is offered that would prevent pet owners from purchasing such plants at their local garden center and placing them in their yard. To be on the safe side, it's important to know what you have in your yard, and remove or replace the bad stuff with dog-friendly alternatives.

Odds & Ends

- Check your garden regularly, and remove any toadstools or wild mushrooms you find—some varieties can be very toxic if swallowed.
- Block off compost piles, which may contain hazardous molds and toxins.
- Set pop-up sprinklers so that they sit at flush to ground level as possible when not in their "pop-up" mode, and survey your yard for other physical hazards such as rakes, metal stakes or decorative garden art the dog might injure herself on while running or playing.
- When purchasing garden mulch, check the label to make sure it's not "cocoa bean mulch." As the name implies, this type of mulch is actually made from cocoa and contains the same toxic principle as chocolate. Its unique smell and taste inspires many dogs to eat it, and if enough is consumed, it can cause severe diarrhea, vomiting, neurological effects and in rare cases it can be fatal. 🐾

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