

MoPlants
Garden Guides

THE DOG-SCAPED YARD

CREATING A BACKYARD RETREAT FOR YOU AND YOUR DOG

Maureen "Mo" Gilmer



MO

MoPlants *Garden Guides*

THE DOG-SCAPED YARD CREATING A BACKYARD RETREAT FOR YOU AND YOUR DOG

Maureen “Mo” Gilmer

Thirty years experience in landscape design and horticulture is the foundation for Maureen “Mo” Gilmer’s success as one of America’s top garden communicators. Among her many accomplishments are fifteen books, a nationally syndicated column, and national television show. Her dedication to empowering people to create more beautiful and satisfying gardens inspired Mo to develop the new eBook Series: MoPlants Garden Guides. *The Dog-Scaped Yard* is designed to help you create a backyard retreat for you and your beloved pet to enjoy for many years to come.



Contents

	Page
Dog-Scape Amenities – How to create a summer flop spot, flowering meadow and a dipping pool.	1
Dog-Scape Design Tips – Practical places for your dog to live, run and bathe without sacrificing your flowers.	2
The Dog-Safe Garden – Toxic plants to avoid, plants that repel fleas and are safe for dogs to eat.	4
Tips for Lawn and Garden Care – The all-organic lawn, recipe for dog-discouraging spray and foxtail control.	6



Copyright ©2007 Maureen Gilmer, Published by MoPress, All Rights Reserved
Design by Revert Graphics



A dog-scaped yard should include places for dogs to be dogs and for people to enjoy beautiful plants. It should be free of things that make dogs sick, particularly when they are bored and most prone to destructive behavior. There should be elements designed to keep dogs busy, give them valuable greens to chew and places to keep cool in the heat. This book is a collection of my best dog-scaping ideas that will help create a harmonious balance between you, your garden and your beloved pet.

Dog-Scape Amenities

Summer Flop Spot



Dogs don't sweat, they cool off by panting. Many dogs labeled "problem diggers" are really just trying to keep cool. They instinctively dig nests in shady places to access cooler soil deep down and sprawl out for the heat of the day. This makes a huge mess in heavy soils, stains paving, plasters the dog's fur and litters the yard with dirt clods. Dot isn't the first dog that has destroyed my garden in the summer.

My solution is to provide them with a pit of their own where it's more damp and cool than the flower beds. Give them sand to lie in and it won't make mud or stains, and easily falls away from their fur. Keep the area moist and your dog will prefer that spot over all else. You can make a few of them scattered around damp, shady, out of the way spots in the yard. If they're watered by a sprinkler head they'll be even more appealing. If you don't have an underground sprinkling system, be sure to hose down the area often to keep it cool in the heat of the summer.

1. Dig out a shallow pit sized to fit your dog comfortably.
2. Mix up a bag of concrete and line the pit with a thin layer.
3. Before the concrete dries, poke a few pencil-sized holes in the bottom for drainage.
4. Line the depression with at least six inches of clean white playground sand.
5. You can add an optional sprinkler head to water the sand every day to keep it moist.

Make Me a Meadow



Dogs are naturally mobile creatures forever on the hunt for food like their ancestors the coyotes and wolves. When they exist in a prescribed yard with nothing interesting or mysterious to explore, they adopt undesirable behaviors out of frustration or boredom. Planting a tall grass meadow with flowers is not only a beautiful, wildlife-friendly form of gardening, it will give your dog hours of investigatory pleasure every day. Sure, manicured lawns are great for Frisbee and other playful games, but when your pet is on its own all day while you're at work, the meadow will become their little bit of primal heaven.

It's best to plant your meadow in the spring to take advantage of the natural growth cycles. Use perennial grasses that come back year after year as well as the beautiful perennials from the American prairie adapted to grow with those grasses.

1. Remove all existing plants from the meadow area.
2. Rototill or hand-cultivate the soil to a depth of at least six inches.
3. Rake out the clods and smooth the ground for drainage.
4. Plant perennials and taller bunch grasses from a quart or one-gallon container stock.
5. Sow seed for prairie grasses or irrigated pasture mix at recommended density.
6. Water regularly and watch for unwanted weeds.
7. Allow the meadow to grow to its natural height and density.

Prairie Grass and Perennials

Plants from the American prairie are the perfect choice for a dog-scaped meadow. The following are a few examples of widely available cold-hardy grasses and perennials to start your meadow. Augment these with annual grasses and wildflowers for seasonal changes and a beautiful animated garden feature.

Grasses

Panicum virgatum

Pennisetum setaceum

Miscanthus sinensis 'Gracillimus'

Muhlenbergia capillaris

Switch Grass

Fountain Grass

Maiden Grass

Pink Muhly

(Prairie Grass and Perennials contd.)

Perennials

Echinacea purpurea

Liatris spicata

Chrysanthemum maxima

Rudbeckia hirta

Purple Coneflower

Blazing Star

Shasta Daisy

Black-eyed Susan

Sources of plants and seed:

www.parkseed.com

www.springhillnursery.com

www.waysidegardens.com

Disguised Seasonal Dipping Pool



It's easy to create a dog dipping pool in your yard for the summer that's safe and easy to clean. The trick is to choose a sturdy, molded plastic kiddie pool rather than an inflatable one that can be too easily punctured by sharp claws. Be sure the pool is shallow enough for your pet to get in and out of easily. Beware that small dogs may find the plastic sides unusually slippery when wet.

The best way to disguise it in your garden is to set it into the ground just like a real swimming pool. Dig out the area under the pool so that it sits with the rim an inch or two above the soil line. This will protect the rim and sidewalls from breakage as your dogs enters and exits the pool. They're also less likely to chew on it. It will stay put when empty, a time when big dogs tend to turn kiddie pools into play toys. The downside with this kind of pool is draining it, which will require a simple siphon pump. You can buy one at the home improvement store. Or when all else fails, bail it out with a bucket.

Dog-Scape Design Tips

All landscape design is based on the needs of the user whether it's for a human or a dog. Understanding dog behavior will help you design features that work with them, not against them. Do this right and you'll avoid typical problems that occur when a dog meets a people-focused landscape.

Secure the Perimeter Dogs are territorial creatures and will walk their boundary lines daily. If there are other dogs beyond the boundary fence or wall, they'll spend even more time walking these same perimeter trails. If you don't allow for this basic instinct, they will trample any plant that grows in this trail. When you design planting along the perimeter or even interior fence lines, allow an 18 inch clearance between the fence and the plant to accommodate the trail.



Personal Shelter Dog houses all over America sit abandoned and unused in a million backyards. The main reason for this is that we put the dog's house where we want it rather than where the dog wants it. My dog is quite clear about where she chooses to lie around the house, and it's always in a strategic place where she can see all the doors and seating areas at a glance. When dogs are outside they want the same vantage point from their personal shelter. They want to be able to lie inside and look out at the back door to watch for you, survey the gate to watch for the meter man, and survey all the perimeter fences for any signs of neighborhood cats. If my dog can't see it, she'll find somewhere else to hang out, and that's probably in my flower beds.

Sources of Dog Shelters and Supplies

www.doghouses.com

TIPS & TRICKS

Determine the direction of the prevailing wind at your home-site. If it's a problem, position the opening to the doghouse so it is on the lee side of the wind. Similarly, dogs won't use a house where the hot afternoon sun bakes the opening in the summer. In cold weather climates, the dog will prefer their shelter in the sun to keep them warm. Ideally, the doghouse should face south or north.



Run Dottie, Run Like most working dogs, my dog Dot can be awfully busy and high strung. When guests come to visit she can be a bit overwhelming. We solved that problem with an occasional-use run for her to use when guests arrive. This is essential for anyone who needs to keep their pet in a safe environment while they're at work or elsewhere.

The problem with runs, like dog houses, is that we tend to put them in unused sideyards and out of the way places. This makes the dog feel like he or she is in lock-down when in the run. If the run is located at a suitable vantage point where the dog can see you and your guests, they'll feel more like they're still a part of the activity.

You can plant flowers and vines along the run fence and even train the plants up onto the top to obscure it from view. Keep a few openings clipped at the dog's eye level for their own K-9 windows on the world.



A Path Well Traveled Once the basics of the landscape are laid out, study your dog's daily behavior. They'll follow the same paths over and over again as they go about their regular activities whether it is through a flower bed or across the lawn. Oddly enough, kids do the same thing. When the soil is wet, particularly if your soil is heavy clay, it will compact into a dense mass. Plants don't like to grow in that kind of soil and it won't absorb water well either. Chances of that well-worn path ever growing in again are slim.

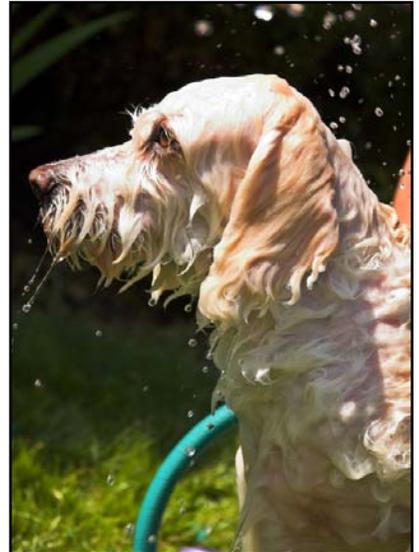
Dogs are creatures of habit, and once established they are

downright difficult to break. Attempts at creating barriers only result in unsightly solutions. The best way to deal with the problem is to make it part of the landscape design.

Surfacing materials can also keep paws out of the moisture, freeing your patio, porch or deck from muddy footprints. Paths through muddy flower beds may be covered with an inch thick layer of finely ground fir bark. You can turn the trail into an attractive dry stream bed with river run gravel and cobblestone. Pre-cast concrete stepping stones will turn a dog trail into a design feature you can enhance with creative planting. For paths across the lawn, set flagstones into the turf at ground level to accommodate the traffic.

The Bath Zone

Bathing your dog often is great for their coat, helps control dandruff, speeds shedding, controls odor and rids them of ticks and fleas. To get my 120-lb Rotweiler in the bathtub, however, can be a real challenge. Bathing your dog outside is one solution, but if you have a dog who loathes bathing, even with tepid water this can be a serious problem. It's important to realize that dog bathing runoff



contains soap, which can be harmful to any nearby flower beds. A good idea is to create a dog-scaped bathing station that makes this frequent activity quicker and easier for both of you.

To create a bathing station choose a location where runoff won't damage your flowers. You'll also need access to a convenient hose bib or run a water line to the location to avoid grappling with long hose runs each time. Consider adding an all-in-one dog bathing system that delivers water and soap in one easy-to-use unit. There is quite a range of pricing on these, so shop around for the system that works best for you.

To keep you and the dog free of mud, provide a wood floor rack or a layer of rounded gravel to let the water drain away easily. If your dog is like Dot and won't keep still, you may need to install a solid tie post or two with cross ties (to keep your dog still). This is also helpful for grooming.

Fencing, Gates and Dog Washing Equipment Sources

www.activek9.com

www.dog.com

www.petsmart.com

TIPS & TRICKS

Position the bathing station close to the kitchen or laundry porch door to take advantage of the hot water line location. Simply remove the aerator from the faucet and replace it with a male hose adaptor. Next, attach your garden hose to the bathing station for warm water baths during those cooler days.

The Dog-Safe Garden



Foxglove contains digitalis, a potent cardiac medication.

When planting gardens inhabited by normally behaved backyard dogs, the best approach is to avoid plants that we know are super poisonous. Because most people are not experts on plant identification, we've narrowed down the list of major offenders by grouping them to help you steer clear of them.

Pits and Hulls Even though we enjoy eating the harvest of fruit and nut trees, these contain hidden risks for dogs. Be aware of existing trees and take care when planting new orchard trees to avoid risk.

Nuts such as almonds and walnuts are housed in thick hulls. These contain tannin and other potent compounds that make them toxic to dogs that love to chew on this leathery texture. Beware of nut trees in the yard and those hanging over from your neighbor's fence line.

Apricots have a pit which is housed in a hard outer shell at the center of the fruit. The pit contains cyanogenic glycosides which release cyanide when digested. Be aware that pits of cherries and peaches as well as apples have similar toxicity potential. While the dog may eat the fruit and leave the pit, later in the season when the fruit is gone the residual pits can become more of a problem.

Nightshades This family of plants contains many edible species. Eggplant, tomato and potato are nightshades, as well as notorious poisons such as deadly nightshade, henbane and angel's trumpet. What they all share is high concentrations of alkaloids which can kill a dog. Even benign plants like the tomato can be toxic to your dog if it eats the stems and leaves. It's wise to know your nightshades and avoid any in your dog's living area to eliminate risk of accidental poisoning.



Deadly nightshade is a common and toxic weed.

Latex White milky sap exuded by plants is commonly called latex. This substance can often contain very potent chemicals designed to discourage insect pests from eating the plant. Even if a dog doesn't ingest the latex, direct contact with it can often cause skin and severe eye irritation. Some of the major offenders are euphorbia pencil trees and morning glory.

ASPCA Toxic Plant List To access a more extensive list of plants toxic to pets, go to: www.aspc.org/toxicplants. Each plant in the group is identified with a photo, the type of poison it contains and what kind of symptoms to look for in your pet. Other useful articles on the site include "What to do if your Pet is Poisoned" and "A Poison Safe Home".

Seriously Toxic Plant List

- Castor Bean** *Ricinus communis* Plant and seeds contains nerve toxin, ricin.
- Narcissus** Bulbs contain alkaloids that even gophers won't eat.
- Wisteria** Pods and seeds contain glycosides wistarin and lectin.
- Foxglove** Source of the powerful heart stimulant digitalis.
- Delphinium** Plants contain potent alkaloids related to wolfbane.
- Poke** Contains triterpene saponins that cause gastroenteritis.
- Buckeye** Large seeds are so toxic they were used to stun fish.
- Yew** Contains taxine, notorious livestock poison.

High Risk Dogs and Pups

My philosophy is to consider all plants poisonous unless I know otherwise, but their toxicity is relative. The degree of damage depends on what part an animal eats and how much of it is ingested. If you have a pet with a history of unusual chewing or eating behavior, beware of all plants. This also applies to puppies which will consume anything from dirty socks to garden hoses. Be aware of these unexpected toxins:

Mushrooms: Mushrooms are the "flowers" of underground fungi. They are highly toxic and grow quickly, sometimes overnight. Beware of fairy rings in the lawn and other fungi in yards with high-risk dogs.

Cocoa bean mulch: In some areas, cocoa bean husks are used for mulch to make beds and gardens healthier and more attractive. Cocoa bean husks, a byproduct of the chocolate industry, contain theobromine which is toxic to dogs. Avoid using this mulch in yards and gardens.

Onions and garlic: Think twice before growing these plants around pets. Onions and to a lesser extent, garlic, whether cooked or raw contain thiosulphate, which can lead to fatal anemia and gastroenteritis.

Others: Rhubarb leaves, raisins, grapes.

TIPS & TRICKS

If you live in rural areas with poison oak, poison ivy and poison sumac, be aggressive about eradicating the plants. Dogs brushing against the foliage will build up plant oils on their coat. This can cause a reaction in some dogs and can also transfer to your hands and arms causing a serious rash that can spread. Bathing dogs often reduces the residual oils but the only real solution is to eradicate the plants completely.



Rugosa roses produce dog-friendly fruit in the fall.

Good Plants for Dogs

Rose hips are medicinal. Lois the Rottweiler would sit on my deck and eat the ripe hips off my *Rosa rugosa* plants. This fruit of the rose softens and becomes sweet in the fall, when they are rich with Vitamin C and many other beneficial nutrients. The vet concurred that they were equally as healthy for dogs and probably gave Lois some of the vitamins her body craved. Moreover, he said that the astringent quality of ripe rose hips would protect her from urinary tract infections. So feel free to plant roses for the dogs and let them forage in the fall!

Wheat and oat grass dog patch. Fresh wheat grass juice is a popular health drink for humans. Wheat and oat grass is also good for dogs, in moderation. They will naturally graze on it when they need the nutrients it contains rather than browsing through your flowers. If you have a dog in a small city yard, consider planting your wheat grass in an outdoor patch near where the pet hangs out. It grows great in low wide troughs. Most pet suppliers sell the seed in small quantities. For a sizeable dog patch, save money by purchasing your oat and wheat seed in quantity at a health food store. It's free of chemicals and ideal for larger plantings.

Plant Herbs That Repel Fleas

Fleas have been the bane of humans as well as dogs through the ages. Before pesticides it was common to strew herbs over the floor of a home, pub or castle to control vermin. The oils in many garden herbs are historic flea repellents, leading them to have been dubbed "flea bane". To use these simply cut the branches and strip the leaves to line the bottom of the doghouse. Dry the herbs and leaves to stuff a mattress which naturally discourages the pests through the winter months. Some of these herbs may also discourage ticks as well.

Fleabane/pennyroyal	<i>Menta pulegium</i>	perennial
Fleawort	<i>Erigeron canadense</i>	annual
Wormwood	<i>Artemisia absinthum</i>	shrubby perennial
Sweet Bay	<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	tree
Eucalyptus	<i>Eucalyptus</i>	tree
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	shrub
Tansy	<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>	perennial



Tips for Lawn and Garden Care

A Chemical Free Garden



Using chemical pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers in your garden is a great risk for your pet. Lawn chemicals are particularly dangerous because pets spend a great deal of time playing and lying in the grass. When a dog is nauseous, it will often eat grass from the lawn to help it vomit. When that lawn is chemically treated the animal consumes the chemicals as well.

It's a lot easier to control pests and diseases naturally if you use the newer non-toxic alternatives to chemical treatments. You'll find everything you need to keep your garden dog-safe with organic lawn and garden products from the Gardens Alive catalog: www.gardensalive.com

Caring for your lawn without chemical fertilizers is a lot easier than you think. You can buy granular and liquid organic fertilizers that are dog and child-friendly at Peaceful Valley Farm Supply at: www.groworganic.com

TIPS & TRICKS

Many organic fertilizers contain delicious contents for dogs like blood meal, bone meal and other animal byproducts. Dogs may zero in on them and begin to dig. To avoid this problem don't apply too much at once and thoroughly cultivate them deeply into the soil immediately after applying.

Storing Lawn and Garden Products

Dogs are naturally curious and will pick up the scent of your organic products. While these organics aren't harmful when used properly in the garden, they are potent enough to become a serious hazard if the dog eats them in large quantities. Proper storage not only keeps them out of your pet's reach, it also limits the smell. Plus, organic products can oxi-

dize and lose their potency with time in the open air, so proper storage is a must to preserve the shelf life.

Following are a few suggestions for storing your organic lawn and garden products to keep them air-tight:

- Large bagged products such as fertilizer: New heavy duty plastic garbage can with tight-fitting lid.
- Pest and disease control products: Picnic cooler with solid-latching mechanism.
- Baits and other miscellaneous items: Flat plastic boxes for under-bed storage or food containers.

Keeping Your Dog Foxtail Free

Foxtails are a group of grassy weeds that have seeds attached to long serrated fibers. They are designed with barbs to penetrate an animal's fur or skin and stick there until they finally drop off somewhere else. When grasses turn brown, foxtails become quite stiff and are easily inhaled through your dog's nose. The tips are sharp enough to penetrate through the softer parts of the paw, mouth and other sensitive spots. Once inside the body foxtails can travel through the bloodstream and cause serious injury. Keep your yard free of these weeds by pulling all grasses while still green.



Recipe for Dog-Discouraging Spray

If your dog is chewing up your plants, this spicy, cayenne pepper spray solution may be enough to discourage them. Be aware that it requires repeated applications. The effectiveness wears off in a day or two. The rain and automatic sprinklers also wash it away. A dog won't be discouraged by just one hot bite either. They'll go back and test it a few times with undesirable results before they finally accept that the plant is not worth tampering with. Use this spray every day for a couple of weeks to condition the dog to leave the plant alone. Be sure to spray the plant early in the morning so that the spray can dry out before the sun hits the leaves.

- 1 Tablespoon cayenne pepper
- 2 Tablespoons powdered garlic
- 2 Cups hot water

Stir the cayenne pepper and garlic into hot water. Allow it to set a few minutes then strain the remnants of the spices through a fine kitchen sieve. Pour the strained liquid into a plant spray bottle. Use as needed.

A Final Message from Mo

Owning a dog is the most intimate partnership between human and animal in the world. Your dog is a friend that deserves far more than a barren square of fenced ground to spend long hours waiting for you to come home. To provide a good quality of life for a more well-adjusted, happier pet the yard should be safe and include dog-focused amenities. Design it right and your dog will play, explore, sleep, hunt, cool off, sunbathe and be entertained as winged wildlife comes and goes. Dog-scape now for a more trouble-free yard, and a landscape that provides a retreat for both you and the dog you love. - *Mo*

Don't miss our other free MoPlants Garden Guide eBooks:
<http://www.moplants.com/eBooks.php>

Be sure to visit the Links & Resources at MoPlants.com:
<http://www.moplants.com/resources.php> for great places to shop online for pet-centered amenities, plants and chemical-free garden supplies.

Visit with Mo daily and read her blog filled with design ideas, gardening tips and everyday inspiration. Gardening with Mo Gilmer: The MoZone blog:
<http://www.moplants.com/blog/index.php>

Don't forget to check out the latest news at MoPlants.com, our new Garden Wear line introducing - HOSE CLOTHES™, designer chic for your garden hose!
<http://www.moplants.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc>

iStock Photo Credit

Cover/Sonyae

Title Page:

Boxers/Robert Kirk
Collie/Joop Snijder

Page 1:

Digging dog/Verity Johnson
White Dog/Anzeletti

Page 2:

German Shepard/Claudia Steinger
Doghouse/Jamie D. Travis

Page 3:

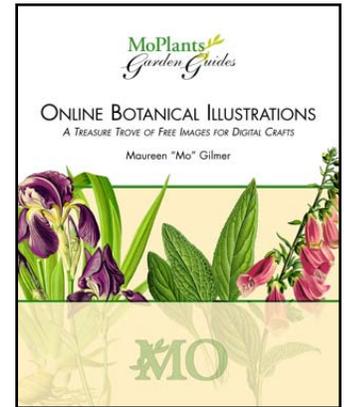
Boxers/Robert Kirk
Jack Russels/Werner Stoffberg
Bath dog/Greg Nicholas

Page 5:

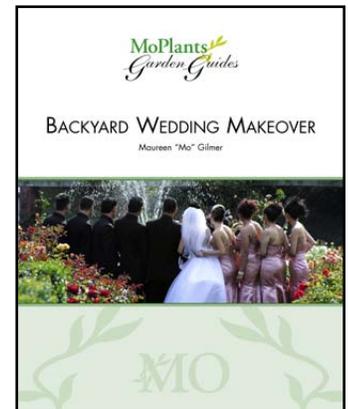
Flea/Carolina K. Smith, M.D.

Page 6:

Labs/Tom Young



Online Botanical Illustrations: A Treasure Trove of Free Images for Digital Crafts is your ticket to creating gorgeous hand-made holiday gifts and greeting cards using free vintage plant illustrations from the Internet.



Backyard Wedding Makeover walks you through the process of revamping your yard and designing a beautiful garden in preparation for that special day.



Holiday Gifts & Decorating Ideas from the Crafter's Garden will inspire you to create a cozy holiday environment as you decorate your home and create gifts with plants from your garden and the wild.

You'll save money and infuse the holiday with activities that warm the heart.

PLEASE NOTE

At the time this eBook was posted on MoPlants.com all links were live and accurate. From time to time the Web sites we refer you to can change.