

# The *Ultimate* Pet-Friendly Backyard for Dogs Guide

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Having some free time in the backyard can do your canine companion some good. Even the most pampered indoor pooch appreciates some untethered time outside. Dogs need a bit of freedom to exercise and play to their heart's content!

Contrary to popular belief, you don't need tons of empty space just for your dog. Many feel that you can either have a dog or a pristine backyard, but not both. Well, we're here to tell you that it's possible to have your cake and eat it, too!

Whether you have a large backyard or a small garden area, there's no reason why your outdoor space can't efficiently serve both you and your furry friend. All it takes is a bit of careful planning.

Not sure where to start? We have you covered. Here's a guide to creating the ultimate dog-friendly backyard!

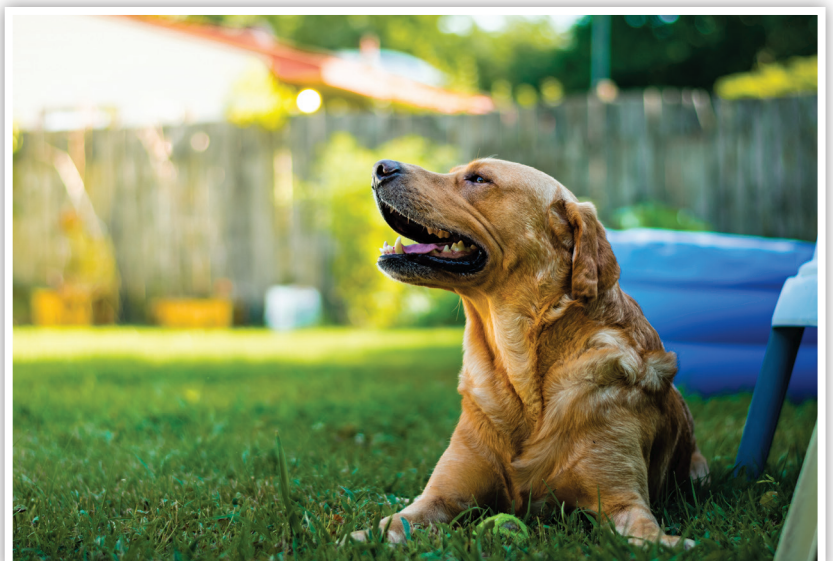
## Pet-Friendly Landscaping

One of the biggest issues homeowners have with letting their dogs frolic in the backyard is the mess they leave behind. There's no way to prevent your dog from doing its business. But, there are some ways that you can prevent those messes from becoming too much to handle.

If you want to create an inviting outdoor space, the best thing you can do is pick up their waste and dispose of it properly. Sure, you can go the old-fashioned route with a doggy bag. However, more refined and mess-free alternatives exist.

Dog waste disposal systems act as mini septic tanks. Drop the waste inside, add a bit of activator, and the waste will absorb back into the earth. It keeps faeces from stinking up your outdoor space, plus, those nutrients could end up improving the health of the soil and grass in the long-run!

Speaking of grass, you may want to consider upgrading to artificial grass. Ever notice yellow stains developing on your grass after your dog does its thing? Dog urine and grass just don't mix! The high nitrogen content burns the grass, resulting in unsightly stains spotting your yard. Regular watering and proper irrigation will prevent your grass from turning brown.



However, the best way to prevent all of that is to use artificial grass for dogs. Artificial grass does not react to urine in the same way as real grass. It's easy to maintain and feels like the real thing. Your dog will be none the wiser!

On top of all that, you can cut back on your ongoing yard maintenance costs!

## Create a Dog Zone

Many dog owners like to create "dog zones" in their yards with clever landscaping. You can't always guarantee that your dog will relieve itself at the same spot every time. However, landscaping can encourage them to keep waste away from areas you want to enjoy with your family.

Hardscaping with rocks, large decking, and decorative borders do a fantastic job of telling your dog to, "Keep Off!" Throw in a little pheromone spray on those "dog zones" and your pooch will have a better idea of where to do their business.

## Lawn Maintenance

Ever spot your dog chowing down on some grass? Don't worry! It's normal behaviour. Many dogs eat grass.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, it's done to get some self relief from stomach troubles, other times, it's just for the fun of it! Either way, it's usually not a major cause for concern. That is, however, unless you have a yard filled with chemicals!

Pesticides and fertilisers are commonplace in the backyard. They do wonders to help us keep our yards looking healthy and staying pest-free. Unfortunately, those chemical treatments can do a number on your dog's health.

Consuming chemical-ridden grass poses some serious health concerns. So, you have to plan for that behaviour. Even if your dog isn't known to eat grass, they may try a sample at some point. Plus, their delicate paws can interact with the chemicals and experience burns.



It's best to lay off the fertilisers and pesticides. There are some great all-natural alternatives out there. They come with the same benefits but hold off on the unwanted side-effects and possible poisoning!

You can also use careful landscaping to address any yard problems you might experience. Keeping your yard clean and debris-free may help to keep pests at bay. Meanwhile, regular watering and proper irrigation will prevent your grass from turning brown.

Any alternative to chemicals is a better choice than turning your backyard into a danger zone for your dog.

An information site to visit for poisons in general:  
**Australian Animal Poisons Helpline |  
A Specialist Service For Poisoned Pets.**<sup>2</sup>

**\* Please seek immediate veterinary care if you do suspect your dog has ingested any chemicals or unknown substance, as the situation can soon become life threatening.**

## Containing Your Dog

The most important step in creating a dog-safe yard is to install some containment measures. Dogs are naturally curious creatures. During their daily "paw patrols," they can encounter an enticing smell or see something beyond the confines of your yard that draws them close.

The last thing you want to deal with is a dog on the run! Not only does a lack of proper containment put your dog at risk, but you may also experience fines and trouble from neighbours and local councils. Needless to say, avoiding all of that is a must.

The most obvious option is to install a fence. In most cases, a tall fence is more than enough to keep your dog within the boundaries of your yard. Plus, it'll block their view to ensure that they don't get too excited by something they see and attempt to go through. Check with your local council regarding fence heights and restrictions.

## Containing Your Dog

The current Dept of Primary Industries Code of Practice allows for varying enclosure sizes which is based on the height of your dog. <sup>3</sup>

Definition: Enclosure - includes a cattery, kennel, cage, module, pen, run, room or any other thing used to contain a dog or cat within a house, backyard or premises.

**Table 1: Minimum Floor Space For Non-Enclosed Dog Housing**

Animal/s	Min floor area (m2)*
Socially compatible group of dogs, < 40 cm height at shoulder, housed in back yard or house	1.5 per dog
Socially compatible group of dogs, 40-60 cm height at shoulder, housed in back yard or house	2.4 per dog
Socially compatible group of dogs, > 60 cm height at shoulder, housed in back yard or house	3.5 per dog

\* Minimum floor area includes the area allocated to bedding.

**Table 3: Minimum Enclosure Sizes For Dogs**

Animal/s	Min floor area (m2) *	Min width (cm)	Min height (cm) for non-roofed enclosures	Min height (cm) for roofed enclosures
Puppy/ies (+/- bitch) < 40 cm height at shoulder	3.5	120	120	180
Puppy/ies (+/- bitch) 40-60 cm height at shoulder	3.5	120	150	180
Puppy/ies (+/- bitch) > 60 cm height at shoulder	3.5	120	180	180
1 dog, < 40 cm height at shoulder	1.5	90	120	180
2 dogs, < 40 cm height at shoulder	2.5	90	120	180
3 or more dogs, < 40 cm height at shoulder	1.5 per dog	90	120	180
1 dog, 40-60 cm height at shoulder	2.4	90	150	180
2 dogs, 40-60 cm height at shoulder	3.6	90	150	180
3 or more dogs, 40-60 cm height at shoulder	2.4 per dog	90	150	180
1 dog, > 60 cm height at shoulder	3.5	120	180	180
2 dogs, > 60 cm height at shoulder	5.2	120	180	180
3 or more dogs, > 60 cm height at shoulder	3.5 per dog	<b>120</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>

\* Minimum floor area includes the area allocated to bedding.

## Providing Shelter

No matter where you live, your dogs will need some shelter from the elements. For dogs that live outside, a high-quality dog house is a must, however, even those that only spend several hours outside will need some form of shelter, too.

Large doghouses made of wood or metal are great for large breeds or multi-dog households. They provide plenty of room to lounge and get some shelter from the afternoon heat.

Smaller dogs can get by with pint-sized dog houses or temporary shelters that don't take up too much room. Set them up in the shade and your pooch will be good to go!

During the warmer months, your pup will need a home that's designed to provide good airflow and cooling capabilities. Summer dog houses usually feature windows to improve air circulation, light-coloured roofs to avoid heat build-up and raised floors.

Meanwhile, winter dog houses are the complete opposite. They are sporting thick, insulated walls that can block out the frigid cold. If your dog is staying outside during the winter, you also need to learn *how to heat a dog house* <sup>4</sup>. Luckily, doing so is pretty easy with the right tools and know-how.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that your dog can do without proper shelter. Canines can get overheated very quickly in the summer and can *suffer from hypothermia* <sup>5</sup> in the winter. A good dog house or temporary shelter unit will provide all the protection they need.

## Preventing Escape

What if you have a super-determined dog, or are unable to install a fence that's tall enough to keep your dog in?

In those cases, you're going to need to do a little extra work to stop your pup from going under or above your fence.

Many dogs are natural-born diggers. They do it for fun or to escape the summer heat, so burrowing a tunnel is no big deal to them! As a result, you'll have to learn *how to stop your dog from digging under your fence*. <sup>6</sup>

There are plenty of great training techniques to put a stop to that behaviour. However, you can also utilise deterrents or install physical barriers that complements your fence.

For example, planting shrubs around the fence line or installing landscaping rocks can do the trick. Some more permanent methods involving simple underground barriers are available, too (see pictured).



Learning how to stop your dog from jumping the fence is important, too. Luckily, a lot of the same training and landscaping tactics apply for a jump-crazy dog and fences heights should be increased accordingly.

## Hidden Dangers in the Backyard

It's not just chemicals you have to worry about! Your backyard is likely teeming with life. Unless you want to turn your garden into a concrete jungle, there's no way around that.

While all that lush life and natural landscaping are beautiful, there could be some hidden dangers for your dog lurking around every corner!

### Insects

Believe it or not, there are tons of insects out there that will interact with your dog. All of the same pests that you have to deal with could cause some discomfort or pain for your dog. The biggest dangers are ants, fleas, ticks, wasps and bees. Ants can crawl all over your dog's body and cause itchy lesions. Oftentimes, they focus on the paws where they have easy access to the skin. Get rid of any visible ant piles and do your best to prevent future infestations. That involves keeping your yard clean and free of any food.

## Hidden Dangers in the Backyard



Fleas are the most notorious canine pests. In most cases, fleas make their way to your yard through small fur-covered animals. Stray cats are common carriers. Once they get into your yard, they can live and breed in the grass until your dog comes by and becomes their new host. Treat your yard and your dog periodically to *avoid flea infestations* <sup>7</sup>.

As for *bee and wasp stings* <sup>8</sup>, the trick is to limit your dog's contact! Bees are beneficial to the garden. This is especially true if you have flowering plants. Consider keeping those plants in a raised planter or area or movable pot. You can also plan your garden beds to where your dog cannot get access.

### Snake Bites

Snake bites are particularly dangerous for dogs, particularly during the summer. Canines don't know any better. They see something new and exciting, so they'll often gallop head-first towards a snake!

Needless to say, snake bites from Australia's venomous species like the Eastern Brown (pictured right), Tiger, Southern Death Adder, Red-bellied Black and Coastal and Inland Taipan snakes, are the biggest worry. If your dog gets bitten by one of these, you need to act fast and **seek veterinary care immediately**.



That said, non-venomous snakes can do damage, too. Bites can be painful and can quickly lead to infection.

To prevent snakes from calling your backyard home, keep your yard clean. Snakes like to live in brush and dry debris. Keeping your yard well-maintained often forces snakes to look elsewhere to live.

### Paralysis Ticks



*"Paralysis ticks can kill affected dogs within 3-6 days of contact. Ticks like to crawl to the top of long grass and low scrubs, and will attach to the coats of animals as they brush past. About 80-90% of ticks are found around the head, neck and shoulder regions. Ticks do not have a separate head, only a mouth piece. Where they are attached to the skin, there is an allergic reaction to the tick saliva, resulting in a crater."* <sup>9</sup>

*Ticks prefer to live in thick, overgrown areas, so if you live in a known tick area, keep the grass very short and check your dog daily during the tick periods of the year. Ticks prefer humidity and warmth, so the ideal times for ticks are spring through to autumn. Particularly be on the lookout for ticks in the 7-10 days after rain or during periods of high humidity.*

*Very early signs of tick bites are easily missed, but if you are living in a tick area, you should be alert to any change in the dog's habits. Signs are incoordination of the hindquarters, weakness of the hind legs, husky cough and loss of voice, loss of appetite and a rapid respiration rate. Treatment involves removal of the tick, however, seek further veterinary advice if symptoms persist."* <sup>9</sup>

### Toxic Plants

Finally, you need to think about toxic plants. Most don't realise this, but many common landscaping plants contain toxic flowers or berries. Acorns and seed pods from oak trees and sweetgum trees cause serious digestive troubles if they are consumed by your dog. The same goes for Sago palms (pictured), oleander flowers, wisteria, hydrangeas, and so much more! Do your research and keep any potentially poisonous plants away from your back yard!



Check the following site to see what is harmful and before purchasing and planting any new plants for the garden:

<https://www.australiandoglover.com/2015/09/common-plants-toxic-to-your-dog.html> <sup>10</sup>.

## Dog Approved Activities

Of course, you can't forget about the activities! Installing some fun activities for your dog to enjoy will make your backyard into the ultimate play space! They give your dog ways to stay entertained, helping you avoid any bad behaviours that could ruin your lawn!

To enjoy time with your dog, consider some exercise toys or obstacle course units! Something as simple as a ramp or tunnel is more than enough to suffice. You can teach your pooch some new skills while making sure that they get all the exercise they need.

For those hot summer days, *dog pools*<sup>11</sup> are a great option! There are many great dog pools on the market these days. From temporary pools that take minutes to set up, to permanent in-ground models that provide years of fun, a pool is a great way to help your furry friend cool off and have some fun!

If you want to give your dog a way to have fun on their own, *automatic ball launchers*<sup>12</sup> are the way to go (see pictured right). Set up the launcher to throw the ball across the yard safely! With some proper training, your dog will quickly learn how to relaunch the ball on its own. They stay happy and active!



## Conclusion

Dogs thrive when they can enjoy some time outside! Despite what you might have heard, you and your dog can co-exist in the backyard. A bit of planning will ensure that it's a space that everyone in your family can enjoy!

Use these tips and turn your yard into the ultimate canine oasis. Take some time to make it safe and your dog will spend years enjoying the space with you.

## References

\* Please note that some of the references from the Daily Dog Stuff site do note American products that are not all available in Australia, so equivalent products would need to be sought.

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