



GARDENING WITH DOGS

Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers and Native Plants

10459 Tuxford Street, Sun Valley, CA 91352 | (818) 768-1802, theodorepayne.org

Man's best friend is not always so kind to the garden, and canines can be especially tough on native plants. A typical native landscape contains diverse and interesting native plants—some quite brittle—and networks of meandering paths. Few dogs grasp the concept of human pathways, especially when there's a squirrel involved.

Here are a few things that dogs have taught us about gardening.

- Before designing your garden, watch your dogs' habits. They have probably already established their own paths. They may also have favorite areas to dig. These will not change. Design around them.
- Dogs like to patrol perimeters. It's their job. When planting along property edges, leave space between the plants and the fence line so your dog can make its rounds.
- In high traffic areas, use plants that are resilient if stepped on. These include: *Baccharis pilularis* 'Pigeon Point' or 'Twin Peaks #2' (dwarf coyote brush), *Ceanothus* groundcovers (California lilac), *Arctostaphylos* groundcovers (manzanita), *Achillea millefolium* (common yarrow) and *Fragaria* (strawberry).
- Though water-guzzling turf is not sustainable, your dog may appreciate a small patch (100 ft² will suffice) of low-growing, drought-tolerant native grass—such as *Bouteloua gracilis* (blue grama grass) or *Agrostis pallens* (San Diego bentgrass).
- Avoid planting ornamental grasses with awns, such as *Aristida purpurea* (purple three-awn) and *Nassella* (needle grass). Awns are seedheads that can get stuck in a dog's fur, throat or snout. Better choices include *Festuca californica* (California fescue), *Muhlenbergia rigens* (deer grass) and *Elymus* 'Canyon Prince' (Canyon Prince wild rye).
- Avoid plants that are toxic to dogs, in particular *Vitis* (grape), *Datura* (Jimson weed) and *Lupinus* (lupine). For a list of plants (native and non-native) that are toxic to pets, check this from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants/.
- Certain plants react poorly to dog urine. These include: *Penstemon* (beard tongue), *Heuchera* (coral bells, alum root), *Woodwardia fimbriata* (western chain fern) and *Festuca* (fescue).
- Cage all new plants until established, to protect them from being stepped or peed on until the plants are large enough to withstand it.
- Include sages, coyote mints and other plants with fragrant foliage—they'll perfume your pups as they navigate their turf.
- Add a small shaded area for rest—for you and your canine companions.