



## DOG FRIENDLY GARDEN GUIDE

Whether you have a puppy or adult German Shepherd they will spend lots of time in your garden, so it needs to be a safe and secure place for them. It can be surprisingly easy to overlook some of the potential hazards lurking around the average garden, so it's a good idea to take a regular wander around for a safety inspection.

### Boundaries

The Garden must be securely fenced, this will need to be high and sturdy. A German shepherd is very agile and if he is interested in something on the other side he may decide to escape for a closer investigation. The boundary fencing should be checked regularly to make sure it is still secure. Look for any gaps underneath in case he has been digging at the base or caused any damage by jumping up against it. After bad weather with high winds check for structural damage which could leave parts of the fence blown down. Any weak parts in the fencing must be repaired as soon as possible; concrete slabs or bricks laid along the base will help deter digging. The garden gate is a possible escape route so it is important to have a sign requesting "PLEASE SHUT THE GATE". A puppy or even an adult German Shepherd could wriggle through even if the gate is left only slightly open. Any escape from the garden could have disastrous consequences. You must also remember that displaying a "BEWARE OF THE DOG" or similar dog warning signs could leave you legally liable if your dog should cause an injury to someone entering your property or a passerby, as the wording of the sign implies you know your dog may cause harm. If you want to make people aware you have a dog, signs such as "PLEASE SHUT THE GATE DOG RUNNING LOOSE" or "I LIVE HERE" with a picture of a German Shepherd does not suggest the dog may cause harm. If you are concerned your dog may cause an injury fit a lock on the gate.

### Hazard Warning

Dog proofing the garden will require removing anything that could injure your German Shepherd. Rubbish, old wire, glass or other sharp and dangerous debris, nails sticking out, stakes in the ground, anything that can be chewed and splinter, a child's discarded toy could be picked up and chewed as your dog rummages around the garden. Dogs often like to use the

garden as a race track charging around at top speed, jumping low obstacles, dodging bigger obstacles, a favourite route might include skidding in and out of bushes or flowerbeds, then off again for a second lap. Garden ponds should have a cover or protective barrier to prevent a puppy accidentally falling in as they are often fascinated by the water. The buildup of the blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) in some ponds during hot weather is toxic to dogs.

## Danger Warning

**Pesticides**, be extremely vigilant when using garden products such as fertilizers and pesticides and store them well out of reach from your dog, (even when the containers are empty) There are pet-friendly alternatives available but it is very important to read and follow the product instructions before using them. Avoid using chemical products in the garden such as Slug Pellets (with Metaldehyde) Rat and Mice poison (Warfarin) Insecticides (with Pyrethrin) Pesticides (with Disulfoton) as these can kill your puppy or dog if ingested.

## Plants

Many plants can be harmful or even fatal if eaten by a dog such as Amaryllis (bulbs) Daffodil (bulbs) Tulip (bulbs) Narcissus (bulbs) all parts of foxglove, Rhododendron, Azalea, Clematis. A full list is available on the internet as well as a list of safe plants such as Nicotiana, Lavender, Petunia, Aster, Camilia. There are many symptoms your dog could experience caused by plant or chemical poisoning including salivation, drooling, panting, vomiting, difficulty breathing, weakness, dilated pupils, appearing hunched up due to abdominal pain, convulsions. Immediate veterinary help is vital if your dog shows any of these symptoms. Phone your vet with as much information about anything that could be the cause, identifying the poison accurately could be crucial for administering appropriate treatment and get your dog to the vet as soon as possible. If you are concerned about your dog's safety around any of your plants because sniffing and licking plants is quite a natural behaviour for dogs, block his access to them or remove them, better safe than sorry.

## Gardening

When it comes to gardening, German Shepherds like to help. Any gardening tools, Shears, Secateurs, Hand Fork that you have been using and then put down will attract his attention and he may decide to move them. Sharp objects in his mouth or dropped on his toes could cause an injury. Gardening gloves seem to be a highly prized acquisition. As you reach for the glove that you have just taken off, you may find it has gone walkabout. Its best to retrieve it quickly before it becomes a fingerless glove clutched between your German Shepherds paws as he gives you that look that says "it wasn't me". An unattended wheel barrow with rubber handle grips could come in for some unwelcome attention from your "garden helper", as the handle grips are the perfect height for a German Shepherd to chew on. There is a danger that small pieces of the

grips may break off and be swallowed, plus its very annoying having to keep replacing the handle grips.

Great care must be taken when using garden equipment such as a Lawn Mower or Hedge Trimmer especially if they are electrical with a trailing cord that your dog could be tempted to tug or chew. It may be safer to leave him indoors and not expose him to this potentially highly dangerous situation. While you enjoy your dogs company as you are busy with the gardening you do need to be aware of what he is up to and spot and remove anything that can be hazardous for him.

## Pet Protection

The contents of the Garden Shed or Garage are often dangerous for dogs, Sharp Tools, Nails, Screws, Paint, Chemicals, Anti-Freeze. Dogs are inquisitive and like poking around, puppies delight in picking things up and squeezing into spaces. These storage places should be inaccessible to your pet at all times.

It is not a good idea to leave your German Shepherd in the garden for long periods of time unsupervised. He will get bored and look for something to do, probably find something to chew, dig a deep hole or two or even look for a way out. A puppy should never be left in the garden unsupervised. For a puppy everything is a new tasting, chewing, opportunity, Plants, Slugs, Snails, and Stones, all of which can make your puppy very unwell

On a sunny day dogs can overheat quickly so it is important your dog or puppy has a shady area in the garden to get out of the sunshine. Clean fresh drinking water must also be available. On a hot summers day a paddling pool to splash around in will help your dog stay cool.

When the temperature rises most people are aware that Concrete and Tarmac can become very hot and burn a dogs paws, but the increasingly popular artificial grass (Astroturf) laid in gardens will also become extremely hot, heating up very quickly when in direct sunlight unlike natural grass. To check the heat of the artificial grass place the back of your hand against it for a few seconds , if the artificial grass feels hot it could cause a severe burn to your dog or pups sensitive pads or at the very least be very uncomfortable for them to walk on.

As the weather gets better the Barbecue makes an appearance in the garden .To avoid the risk of accidents ensure your dog is kept well away when the food is cooking.

However diligent you've been in puppy proofing your garden, the first time you take your new puppy out in the garden watch him very closely because your exploring puppy will be drawn like a magnet to anything hazardous to him that you might have missed !

## Excavating dogs

Some dogs are prolific diggers and your garden may now resemble the site of an archaeological dig. As digging is an instinctive and rewarding behavior difficult to stop, it could be a good idea to divert his love of digging to a more appropriate part of the garden by providing your dog with his own digging area. Show him the sectioned off area filled with sand or soil, let him watch you bury some toys which are not too hard to find and encourage him to dig to get them.

Encourage his digging sessions until he understands this is the area he finds good things. Or you could just leave a plant free patch of earth where he can indulge in his favourite pastime without spoiling the lawn or uprooting plants.

## Plan your pet safe Garden

With the long days and light evenings of summer so much more time will be spent in the garden. Creating a safe and secure outside space you and your German Shepherd companion can enjoy, play and relax in just needs some thoughtful arranging. You can still have a pretty garden if you are a keen gardener. There are many colourful and even quite robust plants to choose from which pose no threat to your dog. Selecting non-toxic varieties of plants , making sure the boundary fencing is appropriate for a German Shepherd and kept in good repair, removing anything that your dog could come to harm with and keeping an eye on what he is up to in the garden are all tips which will help in making a dog friendly garden .

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