

Home & Garden Television

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Training Your Dog Not to Garden

Gardening by the Yard : Episode GBY-1209

Want to help your pooch and plants coexist peacefully? After the basic sit-stay-and-come training classes, you'll want to take your dog to the next level.

"First, have a spirit of compromise because you're both going to live in the space and your dog may sometimes want to use it in different ways than you do. Second, invest some time in training," says dog expert and journalist Cheryl Smith.



After a few training lessons (and some patience on the owner's part), your dog can learn how to play in the garden without digging it up.

- Smith uses the sound of a clicker (**figure A**), a treat and a stone border to teach her dogs to stay out of her beds.

"I've chosen to use a consistent border (**figure B**) throughout the landscape--either rock or cottage stone--to teach the dogs not to cross that, to see it as a boundary that they should not go past," she says. "The training requires a few weeks of some pretty high dedication by the owner."

She walks her dog up to a stone border and stops. When he doesn't go in, she clicks, pets him and gives him a treat. "Do that enough times and he learns that anything surrounded by stone is off limits. If he forgets, a vocal command reminds him of the rules."

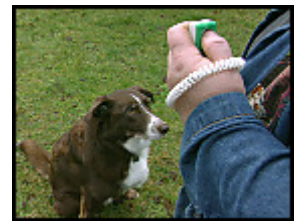


Figure A



Figure B

- Use raised beds (**figure C**). "You can create a much nicer vegetable garden, keep it well tilled and composted, and you can teach the dogs the same way you did with boundary training (**figure D**)--that this is not a place the dog can go," says Smith.
- Instead of trying to stop all digging, give your dog a place to dig (**figure E**). Smith does that by burying a few treats in a mound she's created. For dogs who dig for vermin, Smith buries a battery-operated chipmunk in a plastic bubble. Dogs can sense its vibration. The batteries last a couple of days underground.
- Create an area where your dog can relieve himself. Smith fashioned one in a small rectangular area; she spread cedar chips on the ground and planted shrubs in the back.

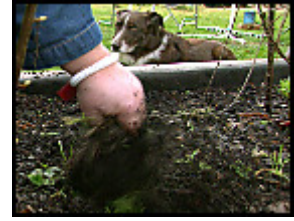


Figure C

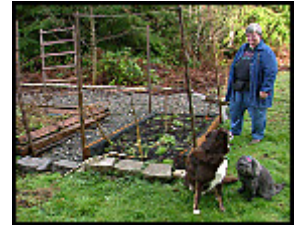


Figure D

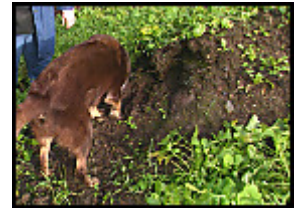


Figure E

- Create a play area (**figure F**). "Even in a very small space, you can get a lot of activity going for your dogs," Smith says. "Plus, you can direct them in different ways, and they have to listen to your instructions. You can really get a lot done in a little area." The best part--playing in the yard uses energy that might have been spent digging and chewing elsewhere.
- Steer clear of toxic plants in the landscape. Your vet or local poison control center should have a list of what to avoid.



Figure F

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