

Does Your Dog Like To Dig?

Why do dogs dig?

- **It is fun and entertaining.** They dig out of sheer boredom when they are left alone in the yard for long periods of time. Digging also relieves stress for the dog.
- **They are searching for prey.** In the wild, canines dig to find food such as small rodents. Instinct plays a role especially with terrier breeds, who were trained to dig for burrowing animals such as gophers, ground squirrels, and moles.
- **They are seeking comfort or protection.** Artic breeds have an instinctual drive to dig, usually for the purpose of cooling off in warm weather.
- **They are trying to escape.** *If your dog is not spayed or neutered, this could exacerbate the digging problem because they are trying to find mates.* Your dog may also be digging to be with the family, his “pack,” out of loneliness.
- **They are in need of more exercise.** Dogs are active animals who need to exercise on a regular basis for their mental health.

How do we solve the digging problem?

- **If your dog is one of the breeds that may be digging out of instinct or boredom:**
 - Try to rid your yard of visiting rodents. Make sure it isn't a method that could be harmful to your pets.
 - Increase the time spent with your dog, whether it's taking regular walks, teaching him to fetch a ball or frisbee, or practicing obedience commands with your dog each day.
 - When you are away, keep interesting toys in the yard to keep him busy, such as treat-filled Kong-type toys, and rotate the toys on a regular basis so there are new ones to play with.
- **Getting your dog spayed or neutered will lessen his/her instinct to search out a mate** when in heat. A male dog can smell a female in heat from miles away, and females will also stray when in heat.
- **If your dog is digging for comfort or protection:**
 - Provide your dog with an insulated dog house for cold weather. A dog house may get too warm in the sun, so the dog should have access to a cool area like a garage, or a damp blanket in a shady spot to lie on.
- **One way to deal with digging is to provide your dog with a “digging pit” so that he can relieve stress and exercise his instincts in an acceptable way.** A digging pit is simply a piece of yard that you can give to your dog to call his own so that the rest of the yard can remain yours and be off limits. Cover the area with loose soil or sand. If he begins to dig in an unacceptable area, interrupt his behavior, say “no dig” in a firm voice, and take him to the digging pit, where you praise him when he starts to dig. Load the soil with interesting toys and dog bones. Make this the most attractive and appealing area of the yard, and reward your dog with praise and treats for using it!
* **The digging pit should be used in conjunction with, and not instead of, other suggestions listed above, such as additional exercise, and more “people time” with the dog.**