

DIGGING

Digging is a natural activity for all dogs. Of course, some dogs are more predisposed to the behavior and others may have various reasons that bring out their digging response. Dogs in the wild dig to bury food, to find some food, to hunt quarry, to make a place to sleep, to create a cool place in the heat, to have pups. Even your dog that does not dig in the yard will 'dig' to move around their bedding (or imaginary bedding on the floor or carpet)...until their place is just right. Then they lay down to rest or sleep.

Almost all puppies will have some initial digging behaviors. Older dogs that have not previously (or since puppyhood) may suddenly start to dig. This can be from boredom, something really great on the other side of the fence, a bitch in season in the neighborhood, nuts buried in the yard by squirrels, and grasses starting into growing season (the roots smell really good...before it greens on top).

Some types of earth can actually 'draw' the dog to dig. Fresh earth, moist earth, certain mulches, topsoil, soft dirt or sand are all very enticing to dogs. So, be prepared! If you plant a flowerbed, turn the soil in certain areas, bring in sand, dirt, mulches, topsoil, etc, have earth areas you are keeping moist...you will need to fence these areas off. If you don't, you will be setting you and your dog up for a digging situation. If your dog is not a digger, when he gets a chance to experience the fun and self gratifying aspects of digging, you will have created a behavior that will have to be dealt with.

NOTE: A dog can excavate a large area faster than you can say NO DIG! An interesting aspect to dogs digging is that when you go to fill the hole with the dug dirt...there is NEVER enough to fill the hole. A good 1/4 to 1/3 of the dirt will have mysteriously disappeared. Actually, their digging has 'thrown' the dirt and dispersed much of it over a large area that is not part of the mound.

A NOTE ABOUT TERRIERS:

Terriers are 'earth' (terra) dogs and digging is a major part of their personality and instincts. Even their nails grow faster than most breeds because they (in natural setting) would dig so frequently that they would constantly 'wear down' their nails. This is nature's way of keeping them 'in nails' needed for digging. This is why terrier nails, in our domesticated 'non digging' environments, need their nails trimmed more frequently than most dogs. If they are not trimmed regularly, they will get entirely TOO LONG very quickly.

Several methods can be used for teaching dogs NO DIG. It may take a combination of approaches. The [SHAKE CAN](#) method is extremely effective. The shake can is my method of preference. Also, you can purchase sprays or dry treatments that can be sprinkled over an area (such as REPEL). These items have to be frequently refreshed as it is the 'unpleasant' smell that deters the dog from digging. When the unpleasantness of the smell diminishes, it will lose its effectiveness.

If the dog has dug a hole in the yard, you can put chicken wire in the hole and cover it over with the dirt. The concept here is that when they go back to dig that area (dogs do tend to return to same areas), they will encounter the chicken wire and it is 'self-correcting'. Some people use

stones or gravel in place of the chicken wire. Some people recommend putting the dog's feces in the hole and covering.

If your dog tries to dig under your fence, you can dig a trench around the fence and place chicken wire in the trench and cover it over. This is a large undertaking...but, well worth it when you consider the possible loss of your dog's life!! You can place metal barriers down in the ground about 12 inches or a log or stone border around the fence. ANY ITEM YOU USE, MAKE SURE IT IS USED IN A WAY THAT WILL NOT CAUSE INJURY TO YOUR DOG WHEN THEY ENCOUNTER IT.

Some people recommend creating an acceptable 'digging area' for your dog. This would be a specific area that they are 'allowed' to dig till their heart's content. I have never used this method, but many have found it very useful. To do this, you would select an area, bury toys or treats in this area. Show your dog their area and that there is something neat in this 'selected' area for them.. Then, when you catch them digging elsewhere...scold them NO DIG, GOOD NO DIG and calmly take them to their area. This is the same concept as 'replacing' an item a dog should not chew with an item they can chew. They learn what/where is acceptable. Using this method is a matter of personal preference and will not work for all dogs.