

# A garden to purr over

'Petscaping' is becoming increasingly common as dog and cat owners seek safe places for their companions



**Q**uestion: What are the best methods for creating a pet-friendly yard that still looks appealing to people?

**Answer:** Get a dog and there goes the garden. That's what many homeowners conclude, but it doesn't have to be that way. "Petscaping" is a fairly new term used in discussions of landscape design that make special consideration for pets. The idea is to protect beloved dogs and cats from poisonous plants and harmful chemicals, while also keeping those cherished landscape plants safe from curious and sometimes destructive pets.

If you watch your pet's habits, it's easier to make workable garden design choices. For example, do you have a dog that likes to run along the perimeter of your fence? If so, keep that area free of plants or use containers. You can also establish paths to direct your pet to and away from different areas of your landscape. While a path will not force your pet to go a specific direction, a path can help you train your pet as to where they should and should not be in the garden.

It is a good idea to use raised beds for planting areas. These can serve as a deterrent as your furry friend is learning where they can and can't play in the garden. Protect tender plants by creating densely planted areas, with a low border of rocks. Use hardy shrubs and perennials to shield delicate, vulnerable plants. It's best to purchase plants in 1-gallon or larger pots when adding a new plant to your landscape. Having a larger plant to start with will give it a fighting chance against a curious creature who wants to explore the new addition.

Ornamental grasses are a durable plant choice for pet-friendly gardens. Suggested shrubs are hardy fuchsia, sword fern, red twig dogwood, viburnums, roses and spirea. Great ground covers to try include kinniknick, sedums, elfin thyme and carpet bugle. Cats love catnip, and they also eat different grasses to help aid their digestion. Other kitty favorites



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**The idea behind "petscaping" is to protect beloved animals while also keeping landscape plants safe from curious and sometimes destructive pets.**

include alyssum, heather, catmint and of course, parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme.

Plants that are good for dogs to eat

include blueberries, strawberries, wheat grass and oat grass. Plant species that reduce fleas, such as lavender, rosemary and mint, can be planted in your

pet-friendly yard.

Your landscape is there to be enjoyed by you, your family and your pets. To provide a comfortable space for pets and kids to play, keep a large enough area of grass to meet the exercise and play needs of your pet.

A spot to keep cool is a must for dogs that enjoy time in the garden. Your furry friend needs a place to escape from the hot sun, so a shady area is a very important element to a dog-friendly landscape. A perfect spot to take a nap.

To provide some pet-friendly options for your cat, consider providing scratching posts, shrubs for a shady place to hide, and a raised platform for sunning and sleeping.

Cats love to use planting beds as litter boxes. Cats are especially attracted to freshly turned, dry soil. If you are not ready to plant, and have a bed of bare soil, cover it with a thick layer of mulch, a tarp or plastic. Freshly planted beds can be covered with netting until plants become established.

Don't forget to check the labels for any fertilizer, pesticides or other chemicals you might use in your landscape. Use organic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides on lawns and plants. A National Institutes of Health study showed that professionally applied pesticides were associated with a 70 percent higher risk of canine malignant lymphoma.

Don't plant landscape plants that could make your four-legged companion ill, or worse. Foxglove, iris, monkshood and lily of the valley are especially toxic. The ASPCA website has an excellent list of plants poisonous to cats and dogs.

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*Do you have a gardening question? Please email, call, or visit the Douglas County Master Gardener Plant Clinic at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu), 541-672-4461, or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.*