

Digging by Marcia Albert

Digging is a natural behavior for a dog that satisfies a need for exploration and mental and physical stimulation. Well, that's all well and good, but when your dog digs in your garden or yard his natural behavior quickly becomes your problem. What to do? There are many answers, but first to find you must find out why your dog is digging.

It may be that he is

- ✓ bored – “same yard, same toys, need something to do or someone to play with” syndrome
- ✓ lonely – needs more human attention
- ✓ active and needs more exercise
- ✓ doing what comes naturally – some dogs, such as Huskies, Malamutes and some terriers are natural diggers
- ✓ frustrated – he wants get to something annoying (bike riders, runners, delivery people) on the other side of the fence
- ✓ chasing prey – a cat or other animal
- ✓ escaping because he's frightened, responding to a female in season
- ✓ seeking a cool spot in hot weather or a warm spot in cold weather

If your dog is bored, lonely or has a high energy level spend time with him.

1. Play games of Fetch, Frisbee and Hide and Seek.
2. Take him swimming and running.
3. Practice obedience exercises.
4. Rotate his toys. Put fewer toys out and switch them to keep his interest.
5. Give him interactive toys such as Kongs® filled with peanut butter, Buster Cubes with kibble inside, Go to www.jbpet.com for a great selection.
6. If he is alone for long periods get someone to walk him during the day.
7. Take him to day care one day a week

If your dog is a natural digger don't fight it, humor him.

1. Decide on an area of the yard that is his dedicated digging area.
2. Dig it out so the area is about a foot deep.
3. Fill it with sand or soft soil
4. Let him watch you bury one of his toys in the area
5. Watch him go!

If he is bothered or irritated by activities on the other side of the fence or he is chasing prey, lessen the aggravation.

1. Reconfigure the fenced area
2. Use a privacy fence in that area
3. Use large rocks at the base of the fence
4. Bury chicken wire under the ground near the fence line and cover with soil. Be very careful not to leave sharp edges

If he is frightened or responding to a female, help him.

1. Determine what frightens him and try to remove the source
2. Desensitize the dog to whatever frightens him
3. Neuter him