



Yard and Garden Safety Tips for Pets

Spring has sprung! An afternoon spent puttering in the garden with pets by your side is one of life's simple pleasures. Keep your furry family members safe as you venture into the backyard this season with the following tips:

Do fence me in: Make sure your fences and gates are secure so there's no chance of your pet dashing off while you're in zen gardening mode. Go a step further and see that your pet's microchip and ID tag info are up to date.

Buggin' out: Be consistent with your pet's flea and tick prevention. Just like us, pets can have allergic reactions to certain plants, pollens and insects. Watch for itching, sneezing or more serious symptoms like shock, which could indicate a reaction to a sting. Seek veterinary attention immediately.

Do your homework: Some plants can be toxic to pets – even garden-variety ones like onions, tomatoes, grapes, rhododendron, oleander, jade plant, many bulbs, hostas, begonia and sago palm. Do a little research before planting anything new, and transfer toxic specimens to areas of your property that your pets can't get to. Please refer to the ASPCA's comprehensive list of what's toxic and what's not at: asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants.

Better living without chemicals: Our pets spend a lot of time with their noses to the ground. This makes them especially susceptible to unhealthy exposure to fertilizers, insecticides, soil amendments and weed killers. Even natural substances like worm castings or kelp need time to be worked into the surface, so keep your pets away from areas where they have just been applied.

Can you dig it: A compost pile is great for your garden, but could contain materials harmful to animals such as coffee grounds, moldy food and certain fruits and veggies – so ensure compost is inaccessible to your pets. Also, be choosy when it comes to mulching. Cocoa mulch is poisonous to your pets and some wood mulches, while not toxic, could be choking hazards.

The fox(tail) and the hound: Not only are foxtails the bane of a gardener's existence, they can be very hazardous to your pet's health. If they become embedded anywhere on your pet, they have the potential to migrate throughout the body and cause serious infections and/or require surgical removal. Weed out any foxtails you find in your yard and keep your pet away from dry, grassy areas. After being outdoors, examine your pet's ears, eyes, nose, paws and coat thoroughly. Consider keeping long, thick fur trimmed during foxtail season.

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