

Digging holes

Why do dogs dig? Because it's fun. Dogs love to bury or recover bones, dig out prey like mice and rats, or make a nice cooling pit when the weather is warm. Digging isn't a behavior problem, it's normal canine behavior and thoroughly enjoyable for the dog. But it can still be a problem for you and your rose beds. If you have a digger on your hands, give him a place to indulge his hobby.

Training Healthy Digging Habits

Step 1: *Break the habit.* Is your dog digging in all the wrong places? If so, prevent his access. Your dog won't learn new ways while he has free access to his old digs—digging is just too much fun!

Step 2. *Supervise.* Early on, don't use the yard for alone-time. Give your dog ample time to learn where he is allowed to dig before you leave him out there unsupervised. Otherwise it is too easy for him to make mistakes.

Step 3. *Create a digging area.* Make a dig pit or use a large pot with loose potting soil. A dig pit can be a sandbox or a 3-by-6 foot area in your yard. Loosen about 2 feet of earth, and remove any nails or wire or such. A little sand mixed in helps drainage when it rains. Then:

- Let your dog see you barely hide a Kong or Nylabone or some other treasure. Encourage him to find the toy and praise him when he does.
- Gradually cover the toys with more dirt every time. Keep praising.
- Every now and then hide something new and exciting to keep your dog coming back for more.

Step 4. *Interrupt mistakes.* Calmly stop any unauthorized digging, then lead your dog to his dig pit or digging pot.

Training Tip: Digging is often a symptom of boredom—too much time spent in the yard alone. Make sure your dog is getting enough exercise and interaction.