



## Digging

### Why is My Dog Digging?

Digging is a natural behavior for dogs and dogs dig for a variety of reasons. Here are some common reasons why dogs dig.

- **Boredom or enjoyment** - Digging is innately reinforcing for dogs. A dog who is left alone, especially for long periods of time outdoors, or does not get enough physical or mental exercise may dig as a means of entertaining themselves.
- **To create a cool resting place** – Many dogs may dig to create a cold resting place. This is especially common for dogs who have been outside for extended periods of time in warm weather.
- **To escape** – Dogs who dig along fence lines may be looking to escape the yard. This can be due to desire to explore the outside world or do gain access to something outside of the yard.
- **To hide toys or bones** - Some dogs enjoy burying food or toys to save them for later or to keep them away from other dogs or people.

### Solutions

Depending on your lifestyle, your environment, and your dog's reason for digging, there are a variety of solutions to help manage and reduce the likelihood of your dog digging. The following are great places to start:

- **Provide an alternative** – If your dog loves to dig, you can choose a location or small area of the yard where it is okay to dig. This allows your dog to follow his instincts and have an outlet for this behavior in a safe and controlled way. Use a sandbox or small pool to create a clear area where it is appropriate for them to dig. Encourage your dog to use the new area by burying a toy or bone and reward them for playing in the area. Providing your dog with a designated digging area can be a simple solution for dogs who dig to hide toys or bones.
- **Prevent boredom** – Avoid leaving your dog outdoors unattended for extended periods of time. Daily walks and enrichment can reduce boredom and provide your dog with the mental and physical exercise that they need. Use outdoor time to play interactive games, such as training games, frisbee, or fetch or to give enrichment, such as foraging boxes or puzzle toys with treats inside.
- **Escaping** – Remain outside with your dog while working with them on these behaviors. Use tools, such as tie outs to keep your dog in the yard. Using things like decorative bricks or a buffer area between the fence and the outside is helpful in reducing the likelihood they will dig in an attempt to escape. Daily walks or enrichment outings also help provide exercise and a chance to explore the outside world in a safe and controlled way.

- **Shade** – If your dog is digging in search for shade or a cool resting area, provide them with an alternative area where they can stay cool, make sure they always have access to water, and other ways to stay cool.

### **Seeking Additional Help**

When searching for trainers, it is critical that you find a trainer who is certified through a third-party organization that requires: trainers prove they have a certain level of knowledge about things like body language, behavior, learning theory, and training; are held to a certain code of ethics; and are required to receive ongoing continuing education. The two main organizations where you can search a database to find certified trainers near you are the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers or the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants. These trainers can help evaluate your situation and create a plan that is appropriate for you and your dog.