

❖ Plants to avoid ❖

Common name	Latin name	Comments
Autumn crocus	<i>Colchicum autumnale</i>	Also known as Meadow Saffron, Naked Lady
Azalea and Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron spp</i>	Can be fatal
Baby's Breath	<i>Gypsophila spp</i>	
Bleeding Heart plant	<i>Lamprocarpus spectabilis</i> (formerly <i>Dicentra spectabilis</i>)	Also known as Venus' car, Lady's Locket
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	Also known as Harebell, Crowbells, Dog leek
Broom	<i>Cytisus spp</i>	
Castor oil bush	<i>Ricinus communis</i>	Also known as Castor bean plant, African Wonder Tree. Can be fatal
Chamomile	<i>Anthemis nobilis</i>	Also known as English chamomile, Roman chamomile
Cherry laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Can be fatal
Christmas Rose	<i>Helleborus niger</i>	Also known as Hellebore, Easter Rose
Chrysanthemum	<i>Chrysanthemum spp</i>	
Clematis	<i>Clematis spp</i>	
Crocus	<i>Crocus spp</i>	
Daffodil	<i>Narcissus spp</i>	
Delphinium	<i>Delphinium spp</i>	Also known as Larkspur, Lark's heel, Knight's Spur. Can be fatal
Dusty Miller	<i>Jacobaea maritime</i> (formerly <i>Senecio cineraria</i>)	Also known as Silver ragwort
Elephant ears	<i>Bergenia spp</i>	Can be fatal



Pest control



Right: Slugs and snails can pose a health risk to your dog as well as be a pest in the garden.

It can be disheartening to see carefully nurtured plants being ravaged by pests, but pesticides are likely to be just as unwelcome in your garden if you have a pet and care about wildlife. Many commercial products are highly toxic to dogs, and kill off beneficial bugs as well as bad ones. Even those which are pet-safe can be equally indiscriminate, but when the pests return (and they will), the natural predators you exterminated at the same time won't be around any more to help keep them in check, leaving you locked into a cycle of chemical dependence.

Rather than trying to beat nature, get it to work for you instead. Choosing plants which are low on the pest attraction scale can be a place to start, and there are plenty of other things you can do which aren't reliant on chemicals. Some of these are discussed in this chapter; it's likely that you'll need to adopt more than one strategy.

NUMBER ONE GARDEN ENEMY

The 'bad' guys you're likely to find in your garden include aphids, caterpillars, ants, scale insects, and vine weevils, but it's usually slugs and snails that top the list of problem pests. Consequently, the shelves at garden centres are often sagging under the weight of anti-slug and snail products. Some of these can be fatal to dogs, and even the 'safer' alternatives aren't entirely risk-free.

Popular anti-slug and snail killers include products based on:

- ❖ Metaldehyde and methiocarb: these can kill if consumed by pets – added taste and smell aversives don't necessarily deter them. Methiocarb is also an insecticide, so will kill helpful as well as unwanted bugs, including beetles that prey on slugs. Birds and hedgehogs



may also be harmed by eating the pellets, or the poisoned slugs

- ❖ Aluminium sulphate: can irritate eyes, skin and the respiratory system if inhaled; bad news for fish if it gets into ponds, and there may be links with Alzheimer's disease (which dogs can also be affected by, although in them it's called Canine Cognitive Dysfunction)
- ❖ Iron phosphate: iron poisoning can cause damage to the digestive system, liver and heart, and although a lot may need to be eaten to do damage, you don't want to experiment on your pet to find out just how much proves fatal. Small quantities ingested over a period of time can be cumulative, as dogs cannot excrete excess from their bodies

Slug and snail health risks

As well as munching their way through your plants, slugs and snails can be carriers of a life-threatening parasite called *Angiostrongylus vasorum*, also known as Lungworm or French heartworm.

Infection occurs when an infected slug or snail is eaten: even if your dog doesn't do this intentionally, they can be accidentally swallowed while eating grass, or if stuck to a toy which has been left in the garden. Infection can also occur via larvae in slime trails being ingested.

Symptoms include coughing, lethargy, depression, weight loss, vomiting, diarrhoea, nose bleed, weakness, seizures, paralysis, and persistent bleeding from even minor cuts. Early treatment will lead to full recovery, but left undiagnosed and untreated, the condition can be fatal. Not all wormers are effective against this parasite, so consult your vet if you think your pet is infected or at risk. Poop scooping, both in your garden and out on walks, plays a part in preventing transmission.

ENCOURAGE NATURAL PREDATORS

A pest to you may represent a good meal for its natural predator, so it's worthwhile encouraging wildlife in the garden.

A bug's life

Entice beneficial insects into your garden and they'll rid it of vast numbers of pests. Adult ladybirds and lacewings and their larvae will gobble up aphids, as will hoverfly larvae; ground beetles will feast on caterpillars, leatherjackets, vine weevil and slugs, while centipedes will eat a variety of insects and small slugs. Even those who aren't predators can still play a helpful role in your garden: for example, woodlice and millipedes help to aerate the soil and break down organic matter.

Wasps can also be a good gardening ally as they feed their young with caterpillars and insect larvae, and help with pollination, but if your dog can't resist snapping at them and is likely to get stung, you may prefer to do without them. Rather than killing them, try discouraging them by using a Waspinator (see *Garden emergencies*).

Plants that will attract beneficial insects

There are plenty of plants to pick from which will



A ladybird – one of the good guys.

Enjoying the garden



The garden is a place which offers lots of different opportunities for you and your dog to interact, as well as for pursuing your own particular interests.

SUNBATHING

Not everything you use your garden for has to be active or challenging; sometimes it's nice just to simply relax. Sunbathing is a favourite pastime for many dogs, although some have little sense about when they have had enough, and you may need to gently persuade them to move into the shade. Remember that, even then, it can still be very hot, and that humid weather can make it difficult for your dog to lose heat effectively (see *Garden emergencies*).



A bed or dog hammock will make sunbathing all the more enjoyable.

Right: A hosepipe or sprinkler can provide plenty of entertainment for water-lovers. (Courtesy Sally Long)

GETTING WET

Some dogs adore water, and a paddling pool can be fun and cooling in warm weather.

The rigid, plastic shell-type children's paddling pool/sandpit are sturdy, and won't be punctured by your dog's toenails, as will an inflatable one, but put a rubber bath mat in the bottom so that he doesn't slip. If you prefer, you can buy larger,

purpose-made canvas pools that don't need inflating. Add some interest and encouragement for dogs who are a little unsure about getting their feet wet by tossing in a few toys and treats that will float.

Some dogs also love to play with the water from a hosepipe or sprinkler, so watering the garden can also be an opportunity to have a game with him; don't direct the hose or sprinkler straight into his face, and if the hosepipe has a nozzle, adjust it to produce a gentle spray rather than a powerful jet of water. Never turn a hose on a dog who is frightened of it or water, or throw him into a paddling pool.

SNOW BUSINESS

A fall of snow can transform your garden into a new and exciting environment for your dog. It can also conceal features such as steps and pots which may cause injury to your dog if he collides with them, so be careful where you throw snowballs for him to chase after. Snow can also ball up between his





A paddling pool can be the perfect way for your dog to have fun in warm weather. (Courtesy Maria Johnston)



If you both wrap up when it's cold, you can carry on having fun in the garden.