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At the AKC, we know better than anyone that your dog can’t be treated like a car or an appliance, but we’ve named this series “An Owner’s Manual” because sometimes you probably wish your lovable companions came with one.

These concise guides give you the tools, tips, and direction to be a responsible and confident dog owner who brings out the best in your dog. Give them a test drive!
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW
what you should know

Racing, chasing, playing, peeing, digging, grazing, and napping are inherent canine behaviors to challenge even the most tolerant dog-loving gardener. Don’t throw in the shovel. These tips can help your garden grow, in spite of your clumsy canines best efforts.
what you should know

PLANT IN THE PATHS LESS TRAVELED.

Before you put in expensive landscaping, watch your dogs play outside to learn their usual paths. Except for some hound breeds, who are not so much interested in where something is as in how it got there, dogs will find the optimal path from point A to point B. And if your tulips are in the way of that straight line, well, too bad.

Because those paths will be an integral part of the design, make the trails look as if you put them there on purpose. A mulch of small decorative bark, such as redwood or cedar chips, gives a nice look, but I prefer cocoa mulch in high-traffic areas because it holds moisture and keeps mud in check.

A tip:
When it comes to planting, take a tip from Charles Darwin: Whatever thrives, add more; whatever struggles, either protect it, move it to a safer location, or just pull it out, because in the war between dogs and plants, dogs will win.

THERE IS STRENGTH IN NUMBERS.

Give your more delicate plants a chance to grow strong by surrounding them with container plants that can be rotated as needed around the garden. Or consider a shield of hardier varieties, such as the more durable French lavenders or ornamental grasses that will take the first hit and survive. When the protected plants are big enough to withstand dog play, you can transplant the hardy varieties and put them to work elsewhere.
**what you should KNOW**

**TRICK OF THE TRADE:**

Canine happy-feet can plow down even the toughest varieties of annuals. Keep a number of wire baskets handy—the kind you fill with sphagnum moss and use as hanging planters. Place the empty wire baskets upside down over your seedlings, about two or three feet apart. They will be camouflaged by the fast-growing annuals and they’ll deflect surprise attacks from yard romps gone awry.

**PREVENT DIGGING.**

Loosen the soil, then cover it with pre-cut pieces of hog wire, making sure that the sharp ends are safely folded under to protect tender paws. Hold the wire in place with tent stakes that can be purchased at any sporting-goods store. (Tip: make them out of clothes hangers cut in half.)

Make sure each stake is pounded completely into the ground so no part is exposed. Then plant starter pieces in each grid. Digging is discouraged because the wire grid, invisible once the ground cover fills in, deters enjoyment of the behavior. What dog wants to dig in a place where he can’t make a hole?
what you should KNOW

RAISE IT UP.

Use trellises, walls, and pergolas to grow delicate plants such as sweet peas up and out of reach of inquiring noses. Stack bricks or large rocks around vulnerable parts of the stem base to change the flow of traffic so dogs run around the plant rather than through it. It’s a good place to grow thorny plants, too—bougainvillea and climbing roses, for instance—but be sure to trim thorns off the lower branches to protect the ears and eyes of the inevitable nosy trespasser.

FERTILIZER IS YOUR FRIEND.

Put an organic fertilize such as Ringer Lawn Restorer on the lawn at the beginning of the growing season, then apply fertilizer and water according to product directions. When play areas begin to show worn spots, reapply fertilizer, giving worn spots extra attention. Not only does it make play areas hardier, frequent and uniform fertilizing also counteracts the yellow spotting caused by urine. Unlike chemical fertilizers, which burn the lawn when overused, organic fertilizers can be applied frequently, as needed. Avoid cocoa mulch, which can be poisonous to a dog if eaten.

PICK PLANTS WISELY.

Don’t invest in flower bulbs—tulips, amaryllis, daffodils, and so on—that take 10 months to produce a few delicate blossoms. One raucous play-session and they’re history. Rather, put in industrial-strength vegetation such as rosemary, ornamental grasses, or day lilies, ones that don’t mind being cut back and can tolerate dog-play.
what you should know

THE “SCRATCH AND SNIFF” TRICK:

Let your dogs double as air fresheners. Use fragrant plants like rosemary or lemon-scented geranium in areas where dogs like to spend hot summer days because when they root around in the dirt and rub against the foliage, the smell of the plants clings to their fur. When they join us in the house they bring the fragrance of the garden inside with them. Make sure the plants are safe for dogs.

MAKE COMPROMISES.

Location is important, but not nearly as important as relocation. Transplant frazzled foliage worn out from high-velocity dog activity. A healthy dog-garden is always changing. I’ve moved prissy plants three to four times before they found a place far enough away.

BEWARE OF POISONOUS PLANTS (AND PRODUCE)

It’s better to be safe than sorry. Try to avoid planting varieties that could harm your dog if eaten. Click here for a list of plants that may harm your dog. [Link to: https://www.akc.org/public_education/emergency.cfm]
Also, if growing fruits and vegetables, especially grapes (these can cause kidney damage in dogs) and tomatoes (the stems and leaves are toxic), be certain your pet can’t reach them.
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As you see, letting your feisty Fido be himself doesn’t mean you can’t create a beautifully landscaped yard.
The AKC is a not-for-profit organization and the largest purebred dog registry in the world. We are the sports-governing body for over 22,000 dog events a year, including conformation (dog shows) and exciting sports like agility, obedience, rally, tracking, lure coursing, earthdog, herding trials, among others.

But the AKC is so much more. Here are just some of the ways we support and enrich the lives of dogs—purebreds and mixed-breeds alike—and their families.

AKC Humane Fund supports breed rescue activities, assists shelters that permit domestic-abuse victims to bring their pets, and educates dog lovers about responsible dog ownership.

Canine Good Citizen® program: A 10-step test that certifies dogs who have good manners at home and in their community. Over 600,000 dogs across the United States have become Canine Good Citizens, and 42 states have passed resolutions recognizing the program’s merit and importance.

AKC Reunite has brought more than 400,000 lost pets back together with their owners.

The AKC Canine Health Foundation funds research projects and clinical studies. Since 1995 the AKC has donated over $24 million to the CHF. (The AKC is the only registry that incorporates health-screening results into its permanent dog records.)

AKC conducts thousands of kennel inspections annually to monitor care and conditions at kennels across the country and ensure the integrity of the AKC registry.

We offer the largest, most comprehensive set of DNA programs for parentage verification and genetic identity to ensure reliable registration records.

AKC supports one of the world’s largest collections of dog-related fine art and artifacts at the AKC Museum of the Dog.

We have the world’s largest dog library at AKC headquarters in New York, both of which are open to the public.
THANK YOU FOR READING

We hope this information was valuable to you in helping your puppy live a long, healthy, happy life. Below, find additional books in our Owner’s Manual series designed to strengthen the bond between you and your furry family member.