

### **PET PROOFING YOUR YARD- JUST DO IT**

Most parents are familiar with the term “baby-proofing,” but pet owners should be familiar with the concept, too.

Backyards can be dangerous playgrounds for four-legged companions. With a little work, though, owners can make them safe.



At SunShine Animal Hospital, we have some tips.

#### **Pesticides, Fertilizers, Mulch.**

Cocoa bean mulch, for example, smells delicious, and pooches may be inclined to eat it. But it can be toxic to dogs, which means it’s best to avoid.

Even with “safe” pesticides and fertilizers, it’s important to keep pets away from the area where they’ve been applied until they have dried. They can be really caustic if a pet were to lick them or get them in their eyes. Some can affect the neurological systems of pets, too.

Symptoms of pesticide or fertilizer poisoning include seizures, difficulty breathing, and overheating. A dog could go from drooling to being disoriented to dying pretty quickly.

Another hazard is bonemeal, an organic fertilizer that also smells good to animals. It can have scary effects on an animal, though, if ingested. It turns into a cement-like material in an animal’s stomach.

#### **Plants**

Avoid tulips, hyacinths, and daffodils—they have an alkaloid in the bulbs that can be irritating to the mouth. If a dog likes to dig, that could be a problem.

Those with outdoor cats should avoid lilies (Asiatic, Easter, Tiger, and Day Lily varieties). Lilies are extremely toxic to cats. A cat who ingests even a tiny piece of lily leaf or pollen can go into kidney failure. The safest place for a cat is indoors, so avoid having the lilies inside, too.

Any time you put in new plants, it’s important to look up toxic plants. Make sure you don’t have anything in your yard that could be a problem.

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### **Bird Feeders**

These are also risky because of the numbers of birds they can attract to a yard. Bird feces can contain high levels of bacteria, including Salmonella. That can make a pet sick.

### **Compost Piles**

Owners should dog-proof compost piles because mold and foreign bodies—avocado pits, corn cobs, etc., found in compost piles aren't safe for curious pets.

### **Other Tips:**

- Dispose of **rawhide bones**. Dogs can get sick from eating rawhide that has been left outside and has started to rot.
- Yards should be properly **fenced**. Keep in mind that electronic fences keep dogs in but don't keep people out, which can be a concern with aggressive or scared dogs. Make sure the dog cannot jump over or dig under the fence to escape.
- For those with a **doghouse**, place it in the shade, clean it often and make sure it's large enough. Always provide fresh water for a pet who is outdoors.
- Pets who go outdoors should be treated for **fleas and ticks**.
- Make sure pets are up to date on their **vaccinations**, including heartworm preventive and flea and tick protection.
- Be mindful of backyard **swimming pools or ponds**. Small or elderly dogs can fall into a body of water and drown.

*If you suspect your pet has gotten into something toxic, call the Pet Poison Helpline or your veterinarian immediately. The Pet Poison Helpline website also has a comprehensive list of toxins.*