

## Pet-proofing by Design

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One place pond retailers can start is to advise customers to watch their pets' natural behavior and work with it, not against it. Then, the pond retailer can help the pet owner identify appropriate products. For instance, dogs commonly dig.

"Dogs that dig do it because they need to dig," said Canoga Park, Calif.-based Scott Cohen, a landscape designer, owner of The Green Scene and co-author of the book "Petscaping." He and his co-author, dog trainer Carolyn Doherty, recommend that dog owners build a digging area, similar to a sandbox, that allows dogs to satisfy that need in an area the owner deems appropriate. According to Doherty, burying toys in the sandbox encourages dogs to dig only in the designated area.

Another common issue: Dogs that like to "patrol" the yard. This often results in the dog wearing a track through landscaping.

Many designers advise working the dog's preferred trail into a yard's design. "We suggest installing a pathway in that area for the dog, something like a decomposed granite as a base," Cohen said. "It feels the same to the dog as running in dirt, but it's not as muddy. They tend to use that area to delineate a lawn area from a planter area."

Julie Orr of Julie Orr Design in Menlo Park, Calif. offered a tip to help protect plants. "It's very easy to note [a dog's] path and then mimic that path with stone pavers or wood mulch," Orr said, "because it's going to get really worn down if it's just bare soil."

According to Elizabeth Bublitz, a Denver-based landscape designer and author of "Pawfriendly Landscapes: How to Share the Turf When Your Backyard Belongs to Barney," chicken wire goes a long way in a dog's yard. She said it can discourage digging, provide dog windows in privacy fences and create barriers.

By recommending chicken wire and a store that sells it, a pond retailer can position him or herself as a go-to expert and drive sales to non-competitors that can return the favor someday.