

Earth Day

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Like every thoughtful person who shares this planet, I have concerns out our environment. More and more, we are being made aware of ways to clean up our acts and recycle our lives.

With this in mind, it occurred to me that we can apply similar safeguards when tending to our dogs—safeguards that are not only practical and pleasing, they are inexpensive to boot!

Now that the entire country is enjoying good weather, this is the ideal time to put many of our environmentally safe efforts into play. Let us start with a garden, indoor or outdoor. Plant the herb penny royal and watch her grow. As she blossoms, pinch back the growth, let dry, then sprinkle around your dog's bedding. Penny royal is not only pleasing to the nose, she is also as good a flea repellent as any powder or aerosol spray!

Mosquitoes, as we all know, can be deadly to a dog that is not taking preventive heartworm medication. But even then, the bite from a mosquito can be stinging, to say the least. Around heavily trafficked areas, plant the hearty marigold. I grow them in wooden tubs in sunny spots where my dogs tend to bask on warm days. The mosquito and the marigold are arch enemies. Likewise, the purple martin is another rival of the mosquito. This likeable bird resides throughout most of our country and picks up insects through its wings. A good hardware store or garden shop sells the purple martin house: a white, roofed house with large holes that sits atop a tall pole. Not only will this bird take care of insects, he will faithfully return to the house you have provided for him year after year after year.

My friend Constance Larrabee, who grew up in South Africa, taught me another anti-mosquito trick that works well on both canines and humans. Take a cotton ball, dip it in liquid citronella and daub behind each ear every evening before sundown. Liquid citronella repels mosquitos yet provides a pleasing scent. Don't forget to use citronella candles when you and your dog are enjoying the evening air.

Much of the above concerns gardens and no doubt some of you are saying, "That's just great, but how do I keep my dog away from the herbs and flowers I'm growing?" Simple. Sprinkle a heavy dose of cayenne pepper around the edges of your garden, and your dog will promptly learn just what is off-limits!

Dog odors need not require spray bottles of cover-up perfume, just fill a bowl with white vinegar and place on a table. And urine on a rug shouldn't demand the use of the carpet-cleaning foams. Blot the stain, rub with a solution of one tablespoon lemon juice or white vinegar and one quart of warm, sudsy water. Blot again and again, then pour club soda over the spot and repeat blotting.

No doubt there are other environmentally safe ways to protect our earth and at the same time make our lives and the lives of our dogs more enjoyable. Please share your ideas with us. After all, this planet belongs to everyone.

— Margaretta Wood, AKC Gazette Breed Columnist

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