



30th June 2025

How to create a pet friendly garden with British Garden Centres

Having a pet is one of life's simple joys, and it's no surprise that our country is a nation of pet lovers. UK Pet Food reported that the total number of pet-owning households is thought to be 17.2 million households owning pets in 2024. With so many new pets around, it's a good idea to think about making your garden a safe and happy place for them to enjoy. British Garden Centres has put together some tips and advice on how to have a pet friendly garden.

Pet friendly plants

While gardens are wonderful places for pets to explore, some of our well-loved plants may look lovely can be harmful if your pet decides to nibble on them. Common favourites like bluebells, daffodils, crocuses, tulips, amaryllis, azaleas, lilies, lily of the valley, begonias, hydrangeas, and ivy all carry risks if eaten. If you love these plants, it's best to keep them out of reach or create barriers so your pets can't get to them. Thorny plants are also best avoided if your pet is the curious, adventurous type.

Luckily, there are plenty of plants that won't harm your pets. Lavender, honeysuckle, calendula, nasturtiums, sunflowers, roses, fuchsias, rosemary, dill, and fennel are all safe choices that will keep your garden colourful and fragrant. Plant herbs and greens your pets can safely nibble on, such as catnip, lemongrass, valerian for cats, and some fruits and vegetables for dogs.

Using pots and planters is a smart way to keep plants safe from playful paws and curious noses as they lift the plants off the ground and can add a splash of colour to your outdoor space.

Pest free for pets

Garden pests like slugs, snails, aphids, ants, and earwigs can be a headache, but harsh chemicals aren't the answer if you have pets, as many pesticides are toxic to animals, so it's better to try natural alternatives. Crushed eggshells can keep slugs and snails off your plants, citrus peels can help trap ants, and a gentle spray of soapy water can take care of aphids. Look for pet friendly garden care products in store if you need to use anything stronger than organic methods.

We also advise planting pest repelling herbs like lavender, sage, and peppermint which not only help keep the creepy crawlies away but also add lovely scents to your garden. You can also encourage helpful wildlife like birds and hedgehogs with houses and food that naturally keep pests in check.



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Create sensory experiences in your garden

Pets love to explore with all their senses, so think about adding different textures and scents to your garden. Mix things up by combining soft grass, smooth paving stones, rough cobbles, and mulch. As gardeners we know the value of mulch to suppress weeds and help retain water but be aware that cocoa mulch contains the same ingredient that makes chocolate toxic to your dog. Instead, choose natural wood chips or gravel when mulching.

Herbs and scented plants are a real treat for their noses, while ornamental grasses and bamboo can create gentle sounds to soothe as the wind moves through them, adding a calming atmosphere.

A small water feature can be a lovely addition, too. The sound of trickling water is therapeutic for both pets and their humans, making your garden a peaceful spot to relax for both you and your animal friends

Playgrounds for pets

If you want to protect your plants and lawn, we recommend creating a special play area for your pets, where they can entertain themselves to their heart's content. This could be a corner where they can dig, chase toys, climb, or just have fun without causing damage. For cats, sturdy shrubs and bushes like ceanothus, choisya, dwarf lilac, and ferns can offer exciting places to climb and hide, turning your garden into their own little adventure playground.

Don't forget to provide some shade for hot days and a bowl of fresh water to keep your pets cool and hydrated.

Boundaries for pets

Your pet may want to play but you need to establish clear boundaries for your pet too. Use short fences, borders, or raised beds to mark off-limits areas. Creating pathways with pet friendly materials like flagstones or smooth gravel helps guide your pets and protects delicate plants. Leave a border between fences and planting beds if your pet likes to patrol its patch.

Security for pets

A secure garden is key to keeping your pets safe, so make sure fences have no gaps or holes, especially if you have smaller animals like puppies, rabbits, tortoises or guinea pigs who might squeeze through. Pets who like to dig can be deterred by reinforcing fence bases or laying down stone or paving strips along the edges.

Cats and dogs can be great jumpers, so a fence at least six feet tall is a good idea if you want to keep them inside. Don't forget to lock gates, garages and shed doors every time you come and go to prevent any sneaky escapes.



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Amy Stubbs, Project and Development Manager at British Garden Centres said: “With a little thought and care, your garden can be a wonderful, safe place for your pets to enjoy alongside you. By choosing the right plants, adding sensory touches, creating play areas, using natural pest control, and securing your space, you’ll make sure your outdoor area is a happy haven for all members of your family.”

ENDS:

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Notes to Editors:

About the business:

British Garden Centres (BGC) is the UK’s largest family-owned garden centre group, with 73 centres around the country. The group is owned and led by the Stubbs family, who also own and operate Woodthorpe Leisure Park in Lincolnshire.

BGC was launched in 1987 with the opening of Woodthorpe Garden Centre, funded by brothers Charles and Robert Stubbs.

Since 2018, it has expanded rapidly with the acquisition of 50 garden centres, allowing it to grow from its heartland to the business it is now with 73 garden centres spread from Carmarthen to Ramsgate, Wimborne to East Durham.

The group has a team of 2,700 colleagues working across the garden centres, restaurants, three growing nurseries, 4 distribution centres and Woodthorpe Leisure Park and Woody’s Restaurant & Bar.

Social Media

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