



KATHY KOPELLIS McLEOD the dog behaviour consultant helps us understand our canine companions

WHAT TO DO NOW

// Regular light trimming of your lilly pilly hedges will help to keep psyllids at bay.

// Check your lawn irrigation regularly. With the warm weather, lawns are growing strongly and can grow over pop-up sprinklers reducing their effectiveness.

// Provide well-located water dishes to help our local fauna, including insects, survive through summer.

// Continue to monitor and control fruit fly on your fruit trees using baits, traps and exclusion bags. Home growers have a responsibility to help our commercial growers by controlling this devastating pest.

HOME GARDENING EXPERT DARREN SEINOR IS HERE TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR BACKYARD DILEMMAS

THE PROBLEM Kim Collard asks, via email, about growing sweet potatoes.

THE SOLUTION Sweet potatoes should be grown from cuttings. Place a piece of sweet potato in a jar with water until it starts to grow, then strike cuttings from the shoots once they harden off. They strike easily and grow well.

THE PROBLEM Mary Christie tells us, via email, that she has a mango tree that is nearly 10 years old. Over the past few years the tree has produced many flowers but, even with careful nurturing, the flowers and fruit fall off and as a result it has never managed to produce a crop. She has added potash but to no avail.

THE SOLUTION You need to be sure the plant is receiving consistent water and is not drying out between watering. Watch for fungal diseases (black spotting on leaves), mulch the soil, and apply complete trace elements when flowering.

THE PROBLEM Adam Carrel, from Thornlie, says his attempts at growing watermelon in the past two years have been fruitless. The vines grow to a metre long and then nothing happens.

THE SOLUTION Watermelon need rich, water-retentive soil, so adding Soil Solver and compost will help. Pollination is also an issue, so it would pay to plant some bee-attracting plants near your veggie patch. Hand-pollinating with a small paintbrush will also help.

The HOME gardening team to the rescue

For your chance to get gardening advice, tell us in 100 words or less about your garden and its problems. Send an email to housecalls@sundaytimes.newsltd.com.au or write to **The Sunday Times, HOME Editor, GPO Box D174, Perth, WA 6840**. Include your full name and address and a daytime phone number. Please do not send any soil samples or plant cuttings.

All readers whose gardening questions are published will receive a pair of Hortex Robust PVC gloves with textured grip, valued at \$7.95.



PICTURE: ALEX CEARNS, WWW.HOUNDSTOOTHSTUDIO.COM.AU

YOUR PET CAN BE PART OF THE FUN

Here are some tips on how to enjoy the summer holiday season with family and friends and your pets without having any accidents or upsets that spoil the occasion

SUMMER entertaining is in full swing and dog lovers enjoy nothing more than to include their best friend in the fun and festivities. The excitement, surprise and delight (hopefully) of sharing these special moments with your dog make for cherished memories.

Since our pets are often included in our celebrations, getting inside their heads will hopefully help to keep the scenarios safe:

FOOD SAFE

It's no secret how well the dog's nose knows and you may come home to an unwanted surprise of food having been eaten if left unattended. In addition, if the food is chocolate or something else unsuitable for dogs, then you may have an accompanying mess to clean up, as well as casualties of an upset tummy.

DANGLY DECOR

Decorations can offer such temptation - tassels to pull on, streamers to pull off and chew, interesting smells. Life is good if you're one of the fortunate owners whose dog can leave things alone, but for those who have had a history of disasters or are yet to discover if their dog is a decor terror, close supervision is one of the best safeguards.

ENERGISED BUNNY

By being pre-emptive in teaching your dog indoor manners and reserving rambunctious behaviour for the outdoors, you can get through your

entertaining in a more chilled-out way. However, those who have dogs that race through the house should seriously consider the placement of their fragile objects. That way blood pressure levels can remain normal and the household can be happy for one and all.

LIGHT IT UP

Picture this: You're out, your dog is outside, your string lights are on and flashing. Considering the abovementioned points, a decision should be made whether it is a safer to leave your unsupervised dog inside, away from the lights, or to turn off the lights if your dog stays outside.

WASTE DISPOSAL

It isn't your dog's job to take charge of waste disposal, but this is where some dogs can get themselves into a spot of bother. Problems occur when non-edibles are treated as a food item and get ingested. So pick up and dispose of these items before your dog gets a chance to get up to mischief. Your bin should be the preferred waste disposal system, not your dog.

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

Dogs know when they're on to a good thing and in regards to a Christmas feast, their nose knows best. Your dog will gravitate towards the dinner table with its nose working overtime, taking in the various aromas. We all have different rules as to what we allow our dogs to do while we're eating. But, as a general rule, if your dog isn't

looking at you like it hasn't had a meal for a week and doesn't have a string of saliva hanging down from its mouth, then behaving nicely around the dinner table is acceptable behaviour for most dog folks. Good behaviour can be rewarded in the form of calm verbal praise, a pat or two, or even a little surprise from the table. That's right - it's OK if you choose to treat your dog at the dinner table. It's the preceding behaviour before you gave it the treat that earns the reward - hence you avoid acknowledging any bad manners or begging at the table.

GOING OUT WITH A BANG

These might be a fun activity to share with family and friends during parties, but not much fun for a noise-sensitive dog when crackers or party poppers are popped. If your dog has sound-sensitivity issues, be aware of where your pet is during "popping time". This will help reduce anxiety and stress levels. Think of your best friend and give it something delicious during this noisy moment, as well as removing it from the direct vicinity.

Best wishes for much fun and happiness to you and your dear dogs during the party season and a happy and joy-filled 2013!

Visit www.kathysdogtraining.com.au for further information about dog behaviour and training and while you're there, sign up to receive some free dog training tips. Kathy will soon be announcing her 2013 dates for her popular Intensive Dog Workshop designed for reactive dogs.