

Apartment playgrounds for dogs

Dog ownership is up in the U.S., and so is renter desire for a safe play area for Fido. While some suburban communities have set up dog playgrounds as part of their public park systems, it is much rarer to find that kind of free space in cities. Multiunit residential complexes that permit dogs and provide onsite dog parks can really distinguish themselves in terms of amenities. Creating dog parks properly is key.

A large green space might seem like all you need, but it has been found that high use damages the grass and bare spots develop from dog urine. Even with consistent lawn maintenance, these areas can become ugly weed and mud patches. An alternative that apartment owners are now using is decomposed granite. It provides a manicured appearance but is more durable and lower in maintenance than grass.

The granite sits on a base of drainage rock and other material that allows urine to filter through and dissipate with watering or rain. Using an irrigation system is also important to keep dust down. The granite can be landscaped with some grassy areas containing benches for people and bushes or trees that provide shade and aesthetic enhancements.

When creating a doggy play area, you will need to budget for a few crucial items: a fence tall enough to prevent jumping; a double-gated entrance or alcove; an irrigation system; a debris containment and removal system; signage; seating for owners—preferably not wood, since it attracts pests and absorbs urine and odors; shade landscaping; separate spaces for small and large dogs; and a fountain for dogs—standing water is not a good resource since it breeds and spreads germs. You might also consider the appeal of some kinds of jungle gyms for dogs, such as stairs, ramps, and tubes.

A double-gated entrance provides a small alcove between the first gate and the gate that actually opens to the play area. It allows owners to enter without letting other dogs escape and gives time for owners of excitable animals to get their dogs under control before a new visitor enters the playing field. Remember not to situate gates in corners since this can create an ambush situation for dogs entering the park and can lead to fights or defensive behavior. Plan your double gate so it leads to both the large-dog side and the small side so you can save money.

Set rules for your dog park, post them and enforce them to keep it a friendly and orderly place. And build it at a sufficient distance from your buildings so that noise and odors aren't a nuisance to residents. You will also want to check with your insurer about the need for changes to your property or liability policies. Once you have your bases covered, open your new dog-friendly amenity and enjoy the happiness of your residents—both two- and four-legged! For additional helpful information, please see - under life safety - http://www.middleoak.com/loss_control.jsp

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