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Check out **Foods Your Cat Should Never Eat**, a slideshow at WebMD.com.

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PET HEALTH

Garden of Eatin'?

YOUR YARD MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR PET'S HEALTH.
MAKE YOURS SAFE FOR YOUR FOUR-LEGGED FRIENDS

By Jodi Helmer

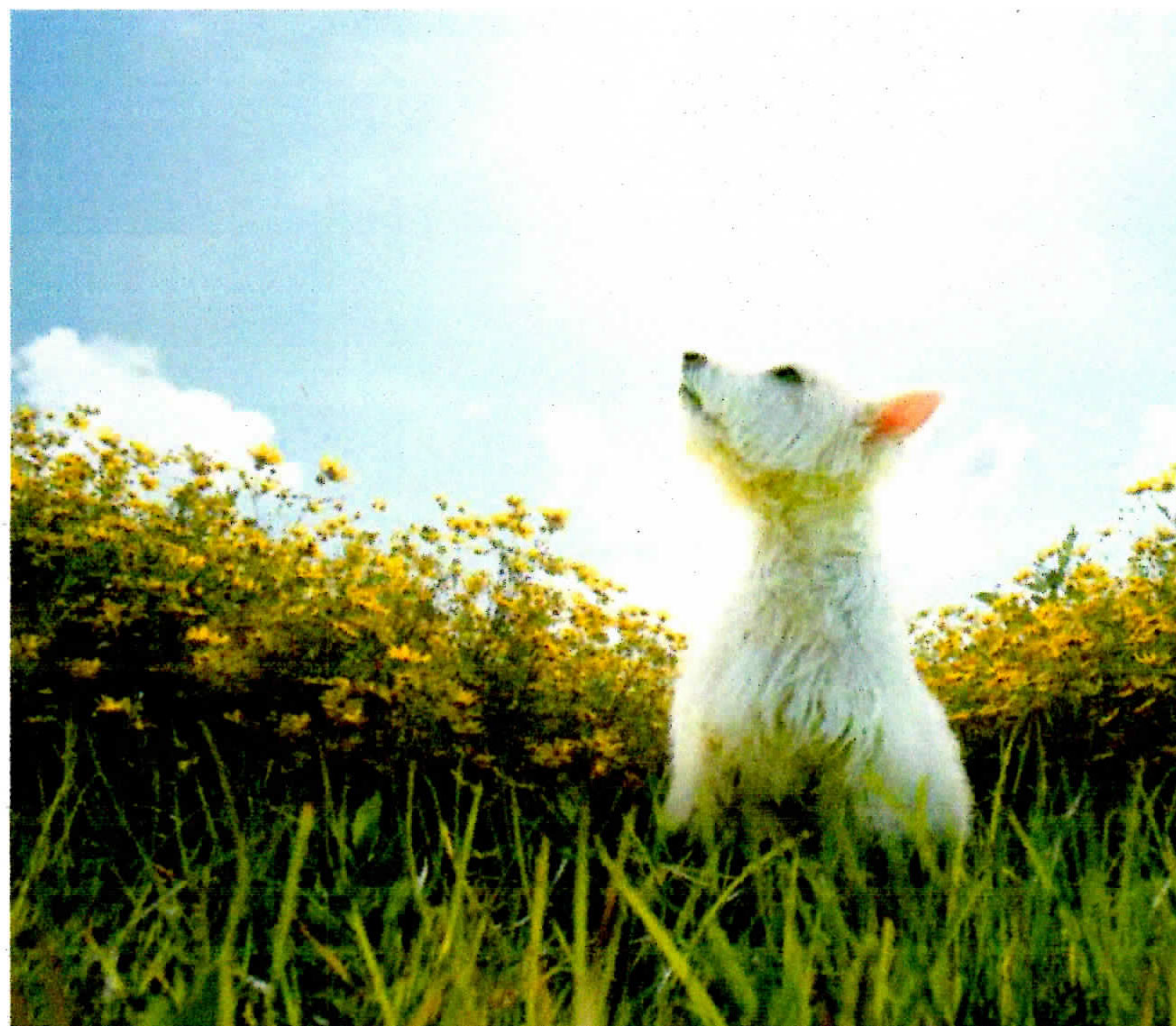
● You're eager to transform your yard from a bare patch of grass into a lush landscape where Fido can play fetch and Whiskers can smell the catnip. But before you buy flats of flowers and start a compost pile, consider how the choices you make may harm your pets. The problem is real: In 2013 the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center fielded 18,000 calls about possible poisonings from toxic plants, compost, and yard and garden chemicals. Consider the following before you get started planting.

Avoid poisonous plants. Several popular plants are toxic to dogs and cats. Begonias, clematis, and azaleas may trigger symptoms ranging from vomiting and diarrhea to death in dogs. For cats, eating lilies can be fatal, according to Tina Wismer, DVM, a veterinarian, master gardener, and medical director of the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center.

"Your new puppy is not the same as your old dog and may chew on the plants in your backyard," Wismer says.

Before you go to the garden center, check the list of poisonous plants on the ASPCA's website and avoid species that could cause health problems. If any plants already in your garden are on the list, consider removing them.

Cover the compost pile. The scent of rotting produce might tempt your pup to turn the compost pile into a canine buffet. While it's safe to feed your dog some fresh fruits and vegetables, once produce hits the compost pile, mold and fungus can turn an



unauthorized nosh into a trip to the vet. "Some molds can cause tremors and seizures if they're ingested," Wismer says. And certain compostable foods, including grapes and onions, are toxic to dogs even before mold forms.

Look for compost bins with secure latches or install a fence around the compost pile to limit your pets' access. Wismer also suggests scanning your yard and picking any mushrooms (which can be toxic) as well as fruit and nuts that drop from trees (which will mold if left untouched) and adding them to the compost pile before your pet finds them.

Read labels. Many common fertilizers and insecticides pose potential

dangers. "As a general rule, most fertilizers are only going to cause vomiting and diarrhea if ingested," Wismer says. "Insecticides are much more deadly and can cause tremors and seizures."

Before applying chemicals, read the labels and follow the recommendations. Some manufacturers advise keeping pets off the grass or out of the garden for 24 to 48 hours after use.

Even organic options can pose a risk. Chicken-based manure and fertilizers, for example, may carry salmonella, and other types of manure, including cattle and sheep manure, contain ammonia. Both are toxic to pets.

Minimize flea and tick risks. Your garden could be an accidental haven for

Reviewed by Will Draper, DVM
WebMD Pet Health Expert