

How does your DOGGIE GARDEN grow?

A dog-friendly garden beckons in peaceful Manoa Valley

PHOTOS | CHRIS LUKE



A largely unused patio surrounded by a white picket fence next to Hawaii Doggie Bakery in Manoa Valley became the source of inspiration. “I was baking in the kitchen and had my hands full of fresh steamed Okinawan sweet potato when it suddenly occurred to me...let’s build a dog-friendly garden,” said Niki Libarios, bakery co-owner. Established in 1998, HDB is widely known for its innovative and healthy dog treats using fresh local human-grade ingredients.

Collaborating with long-time friend Val Yoshikane, owner of Leaf Creations, the two set to work on researching dog-friendly herbs, fruits and vegetables and ornamental plants. Val, a long-time animal wellness advocate and gardening enthusiast was excited and honored. “I enjoy sharing how eating fresh improves wellness by eating a seasonal rainbow.”

The new garden launched in early July with a late afternoon Garden Pawty for dogs and their owners. While enjoying fresh fruit skewers and special HDB creations including Pineapple Mini Cakes and Sweet Potato Boba Drinks, guests learned about fruits and vegetables that add nutritional value to their diets as well as which non-toxic ornamental plants are best to include in a garden.

BPA-free grow bags featured thoughtfully curated companion plantings of herbs with

Top: Sweet potato thriving along with purple ola’a beauty.
Center: Garden Pawty pupu—fresh fruit skewers.
Bottom: A Green Dog welcomes visitors.

appropriate ornamentals for shade and ground cover. Soil was conditioned with EM1 (elective microorganisms) allowing nutrients to become bioavailable for plants to absorb. Val’s favorite pet-friendly duo are the self-propagating alyssum and ola’a beauty (wishbone flower/torenia). The diminutive flower of the alyssum attracts pollinators, is an insectary plant (repels bad bugs, attracts beneficial insects) and a ground cover for weed control and longevity. The bees love the purple ola’a beauty. It also provides ground cover for weed control and semi-shade for seedlings. Turmeric and ginger plants were also featured in groupings to provide shade and wind block.

Hawaii Doggie Bakery’s dog-friendly garden will be switched out based on seasonal plants appropriate to the Manoa Valley climate. Stop by and be inspired to start your own backyard or lanai garden. Val and Niki believe in feeding yourselves and pets with colorful fresh seasonal foods for health and vitality—let food be thy medicine!

Resources to learn more about local gardening

- Classes available at:
Oahu Urban Garden Center or Halawa Xeriscape Garden.
- OMRI.org (Organic Materials Review Institute) for lists of organic alternatives for fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

Fresh cooked for your pet

Kauai veterinarian Ihor Basko offers classes on fresh cooked vegetables and fruits for pets. Workshops held twice yearly on Oahu. drbasko.com



L-R: Niki Libarios, co-owner of Hawaii Doggie Bakery with green thumb Val Yoshikane of Leaf Creations.



A pawtyer sizes up the grass sprouts bar.



Young mini sunflower and marigold take hold under the protective spread of ginger and ola’a beauty.