Who Ate the Flowers? Garden Safety for Your Dog

–Authored by the Black Gardening Hand of Death and Destruction

I am NOT a green thumb by any stretch of the imagination or in any alternate universe. In fact, if plants could talk among themselves (and who knows, they might), they'd probably refer to me as The Black Gardening Hand of Death and Destruction.

Nearly everything I plant dies. Perennials become annuals (as in, they don't come back next year). When I'm weeding, I can't tell what I planted from the weeds and usually pull out things I planted on purpose.

But, each year, I yearn for a yard out of a Home and Gardens spread. Each year, I troll the online-ordering plant companies, fight the Memorial Day weekend crowds at Lowes, and haunt the local garden centers. I pick a range of plants and doom the poor suckers to death.

In short, I'm a gardening horror show. But let's get to the dog-related part.

I have two beautiful German Shepherds. And, so in addition to having to consider the soil, zone, drainage, height, longevity, blooming season, width, sun, shade, watering, feeding, pruning, etc. requirements for the plant—what's VERY important is if what I plant is SAFE for my dogs should they decide to make a little snack of a flower or leaf while I'm not looking.

- CHECK YOUR YARD for dangerous plants (and mushrooms!): www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants

- DESIGN DOG-FRIENDLY YARDS: www.whole-dog-journal.com/issues/7_3/features/Dogs-and-Summertime-Gardening_5616-1.html

- DON'T LEAVE YOUR DOG UNATTENDED in the yard/garden

- KNOW THE SIGNS that your dog may have ingested a troublesome plant (or any other dangerous substance): www.caninejournal.com/dog-poison-symptoms/

- CALL YOUR VET OR THE PET POISON HELPLINE immediately if you suspect your dog ingested or came in contact with a dangerous plant: www.petpoisonhelpline.com

Here's to having a healthy, beautiful garden—one safe for your dogs! And may your plants live longer than mine (probably a sure bet!).