

# Creature Comforts



New products and amenities make everyone happy in the new dog house.

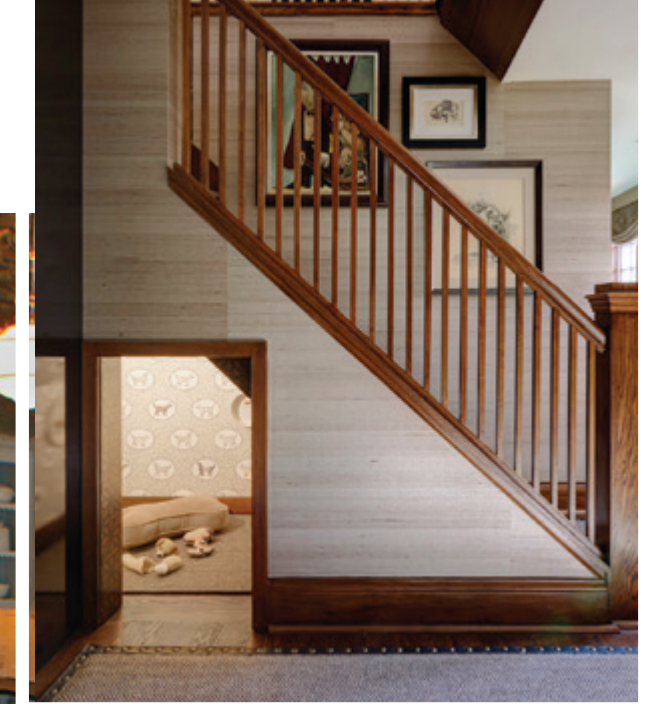
By Stacey Freed

a spa-like bathroom with river stone lining the shower floor, a specialty drying area, and an outdoor deck surrounding a small pool for you and your friends—who wouldn't enjoy such luxuries? One lucky dog in Renton, Washington, has access to it all, courtesy of the cable show *Animal Crib*s, but more and more dog owners are investing in remodeling their homes to accommodate their four-legged family members. In fact, according to a Houzz survey, more than a third of homeowners have made pet-related home upgrades, and new-home builder Ashton Woods is designing pet amenities with their custom homes. “In a nationwide survey, we found that 77 percent of people looking to move in the next 10 years had a pet living at home,” says Leigh Speicher, AW’s director of design stu-

dios. “Forty-two percent of them said having a dedicated space for their pet in their next home is important.”

## Sleep. Eat. Stay.

Remodeling for your dog is all about blending in the things that satisfy your pet’s needs



Triple dog dishes tucked out of the way and (inset) an understairs area transformed into a canine hideaway. Opposite: Dog-wash room amenities include a comfy bed in a cubby hole.

with the style of your home. “There are three things dog owners grapple with,” says Kyle Sheffield, principal, LDa Architecture & Interiors in Boston. “The crate/bed location—sometimes it’s not the most aesthetically attractive to have a crate in middle of your house—the feeding area, which is usually a high-traffic area that gets messy; and gates to keep their dogs in or away from certain parts of the house.”

In the kitchen, dog owners are installing food and water bowls in the toe kick area under cabinets or at the end of a cabinet run. Sheffield also has located feeding bowls in pull-out drawers in the food pantry.

Amy Britton, owner of Artisan Kitchens in Osterville, Massachusetts, likes to include roll-out bins on an island for bulk food storage—just as some people have for

recycling and trash. She also has designed cabinetry with crates tucked in them, with a mesh front. “It keeps the crate from being in the open but the dog can still be part of the social scene,” she says. “It’s not a huge additional expense; these would be cabinets anyway.”

For more storage, the end of a cabinet run or the side of the refrigerator is a great place for a slim cabinet to hold leashes, dog brushes, and poop bags.

As for keeping the dogs in a dedicated space, baby gates aren’t very attractive. New options like the Hideagate fold and tuck neatly into a doorway, as would a hidden pocket door.

### Wash Me

One of the biggest problems is dog washing. “Our set-up just didn’t work for anyone,” says Barbara Marshall of Akron, Ohio. When Roxy and Bella, two mid-size mixed-breeds, came indoors after a romp in Marshall’s wooded yard, she used to pick them up and pop them in a deep stainless steel sink to get clean. But with the dogs getting a bit heavier and arthritic, it

became both difficult for Marshall to lift them and uncomfortable for the dogs to be lifted. So when the Marshalls remodeled their kitchen, they decided to also remodel the laundry room to include a dog washing station, dog bed, and storage for doggie paraphernalia.

“More and more people are asking for dog wash areas,” says Ken Perrin, owner of Artistic Renovations of Ohio, who did the Marshalls’ remodel. “It’s not only a good idea for the dogs but for everyday use.”

The Marshalls chose a walk-in shower “big enough for a good-size dog,” Perrin says. It’s fully tiled and has handheld sprayers with a long flexible hose so Marshall can easily wash the dogs. “I wanted a nozzle where I could turn on the water, adjust the temperature, and then be able to put the nozzle down and have the water go off but not have to readjust it all again when I went back to it,” Marshall says. She found a commercial kitchen hose worked best, but it was too strong. The “plumber took apart the shower head and drilled holes in the faceplate so there would be a softer spray,” Marshall says. They used a regular drain since the dogs aren’t big shedders. If hair is an issue you can get a hair trap, sort of like a dryer’s lint screen, to place under the drain.

Since a shower is the most expensive part of a bathroom remodel, the cost can range anywhere from \$4,500 and up depending on the size of the shower and the type of tiles chosen, Perrin says. The Marshalls chose penny

rounds for the floor, “to give the dogs a little more grip,” Marshall says.

When not in use by the dogs, the space is great for washing off your boots and sports equipment “without having to bend over a tub. It starts off by helping with the dog, but then this wash area solves other problems,” Perrin points out.

If not a shower, an alternative wash station has steps leading up to a large tub. “We’ve found that what works best is a custom-built solution that fits a homeowner’s needs in terms of their own height and the number, age, and size of their dogs,” says Butch Sprenger, a custom builder and owner of Destiny Homes in Wayzata, Minnesota.

Whether a shower or tub, there should be plenty of storage and an area for drying away from the washing station, Sprenger says.

The Marshalls’ dog shower is part of their laundry/utility room. Perrin designed it so there’s a bed under a countertop between the shower and a stacked washer-dryer. The dogs like to feel the vibrations of the machines and they can get a good look into the kitchen while they hang out in their bed. “They love that little cubby space,” Marshall says.

### Good Design for All

If you’re not remodeling a whole space, there are plenty of little things you can do to incorporate dog amenities with beautiful design.

Dog beds have come a long way. “You





Winnie in her custom furniture bed (left); Sadie lounges in her recessed crate (right); High-performance fabrics protect furniture from pup's paws (below).



can finally make your—dare I say—favorite member of the family's hang-out match your well-designed home," says remodeler Jason Longo owner of JDL Design Group, in Rochester, New York. He has a line of custom pet beds that are more like furniture. "Historically, pet beds can be kind of 'kitschy' and can detract from your well-designed environment."

There are even Murphy beds for dogs. Architect Ed Richardson of Clark Richardson Architects in Austin, Texas, designed an eight-inch deep mahogany credenza that folds down from the wall to reveal a dog bed and storage.

Unused space below a stairwell is a good place for a dog "bedroom," says Denise Antonucci, principal at ASI Interiors in Chica-

go. "It's a great way to fill this space and not encroach on the existing architecture of the house," she says.

Turf, a 100-pound chocolate Labrador Retriever and the lucky dog in *Animal Cribs*, has a sweet set-up. As "wildlife manager" for the Seattle Seahawks, "Turf needs a bath every day," says owner Kirstin Mahoney. "You never know what he's going to smell like." Mahoney's fiancé Sergio Pedroza, turf manager for the Seahawks' practice facility, brings Turf, now 5, to work with him to chase birds and other critters from the field each day. Af-

ter cleaning up in his luxe shower, Turf retires to a large dog bed tucked into a custom-built sideboard. Under the bed is a cooling pad for hot days, and the crated bed is equipped with a heated drying fan for cold days. During Seahawks games, the crate top makes a great buffet counter.

### The Right Stuff

Plenty of pooches are allowed on the couch. You might not think to use white fabric, but, says designer Michele Holbrook, owner of Casabella Interiors on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, "you can bleach it and it's super easy to clean. It's more durable than people think." Or choose a couch color that matches your dog's hair color, suggests Holbrook. But, she cautions, stay away from chenilles and velours that might attract hair if your dog sheds a lot.

There are also many new high-performance fabric options from Sunbrella, Crypton, Revolution, and Kravet that are beautiful as well as durable. "Crypton now has a high-performance velvet, a short-weaved fabric with a little softness. You don't even have to top treat the fabric," says Abbe Fenimore, interior designer and owner of Studio Ten 25 in Dallas, Texas. Fenimore's knowledge comes from experience: "Our dog [a Brittany] likes to use the bottom of the sofa as a napkin. Having fabric to withstand the wear and tear of an animal is important," she says. "With the Crypton, there aren't a lot of pattern options;

it's mostly solids, but that's a great way to start with design."

Underfoot, you want flooring that's comfortable to walk on, easy to maintain, and minimizes nail scratches.

The lighter the floor, the fewer scratches will show. Sheffield says he recommends white oak with clients who want wood since it's light but also a fairly dense floor. The new wood-look laminates are a durable option. For clients wanting darker floors, which "can telegraph a lot of dog hair and scratches, we typically stain it first but then do two coats of high-gloss poly, which is a harder finish. And then we do a final coat in satin. It takes the sheen out of the floor, and there are many layers of durability before you hit the stain."

Some remodelers will specify wax over a wood floor, but you need to be careful if it's going to be in a sun-filled space. "You'll have to maintain it over time because of the UV rays," Sheffield says. "You may need UV coating on windows to keep the wax from peeling."

If you really want carpet, says Britton, try Flor carpet tiles. "You can lay them down in patterns or to look like continuous wall-to-wall," Britton says. "The beauty is if you get a soiled spot you just replace the ruined tile with a fresh new one."

No matter how you choose to design your spaces, your goal is, as Fenimore says, to "make your home feel like their home, too." **FD**