

How to build a private Sensory Garden for your dog

By Thirza, www.sneupenbijwillem.nl



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INTRODUCTION

Hi, I am Thirza.

I live on a small farm in the North of the Netherlands (Friesland) with my best friend (husband), dogs, horses and some chickens.

Sensory Garden 'Sneupen bij Willem', that's my own garden of which I am very proud of. The word 'Sneupen' means in Frisian language: leisurely wandering, freely sniffing, strolling, foraging, tracking, and sniffing. And Willem? Willem is my heart dog, a beautiful male Rottweiler.

Nine years (2015) ago Willem came into our lives as a puppy. He was a rather tiny, a somewhat insecure and shy little guy. Many things scared him and he was somewhat fearful, sceptical. The looks of a Rottweiler, but a real gentleman in behaviour. A dog who needed to be guided and understood.

In addition to puppy clicker training, 'Hersenwerk voor honden' (brain games for dogs), turned out to be a golden opportunity for Willem! It did him a lot of good. When he was about six months old, we were introduced to mantrailing and to scent detection .

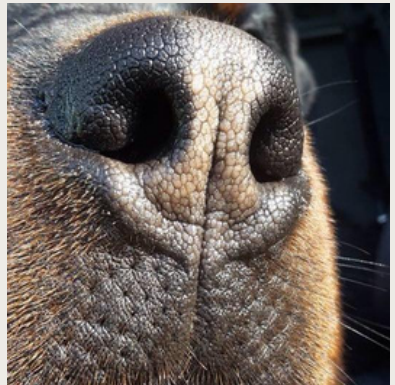
It was like a whole new world opened up for us; **the world of the dog's nose** and how the use of senses for a dog impacts its wellbeing. Sniffing and working with his nose gave him so much satisfaction and confidence. It was just wonderful to see.

After a lengthy sequence of courses, seminars and other forms of tuition, I was confident enough to open my own sensory garden, four years ago, where I have welcomed many dogs and their owners since.

My curiosity took me in the direction of adopting senior rescue dogs and to 'observation skills', a technique which immediately applies to dogs visiting my Sensory Garden.

The goals for my Sensory Garden are to:

- allow as many **dogs** as possible to experience the power of garden
- teach as many **owners** as possible to learn to observe their dog
- generate as much **funding** as possible (through donations) for local charities for animal welfare.
- learn as much as possible about '**Sensory Wellness**'



INTRODUCTION

Hi, I am Thirza.

The Dutch Sensory Garden Initiative.

Sneupen bij Willem is part of the 'Snuffeltuinen Initiatief': the Dutch Sensory Garden Initiative.

What is the Snuffeltuinen Initiatief?

The 'Snuffeltuinen Initiatief' is a Dutch collaborative well-being project for dogs by various dog lovers. By dog lovers, we mean people who want to share the sniffing garden experience by opening their garden and time to other dogs. All on voluntary basis and without any commercial gain.

In the recent years, the initiative has really become a household name. More and more dog professionals and dog owners truly see the importance and benefits of 'Sensory Wellness': many more gardens are being visited, dog schools are setting up a Sensory Garden, behavior therapists are referring clients to Sensory Gardens, companies are giving lectures/webinars about our Sensory Gardens concept and are promoting it.

We, **Birgitta** and myself, are being contacted by dog professionals, universities etc.. around the world asking us for help and advice.

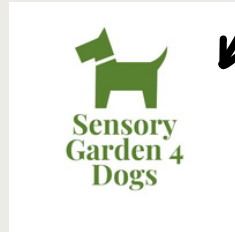
YEAH, *Sensory Enrichment & Sensory Wellness is here to stay!*

Who is Birgitta?

Birgitta Geerlings-Wensveen is the founder and director of this magnificent Dutch initiative. She started it in 2017 as a final project for the Dog Trainer and Behavior Specialist course at Calming Signs

Since a couple of years I have the honour to be the co-director of the 'Snuffeltuinen Initiatief'.

Sensory Garden 4 Dogs is the English twin of Dutch Initiative, which is run by **Laura Dobb** (director of the Slow Dog Movement.org), Birgitta Geerlings-Wensveen and myself.



INTRODUCTION

My Sensory Garden



NOORDWOLDE-ZUID, NL



1.50M (5 FT)



525M2 (5651 SQ FT)

How wonderful is it to see your dog freely and undisturbed using its nose and other senses in a safe, enclosed environment?

To see your dog go on a nose adventure in a rural setting while you enjoy the peace and quiet, a cup of tea and a good conversation?

A mini-vacation, a wellness moment for both dog and owner, that is the Sensory Garden.

A place where the dog can truly relax, be itself, and do what it is good at: using its senses.

Where you, as the owner, can see your dog completely free and discover who your dog really is.

All that sniffing and sneeping meets an important need of a dog, good for its well-being and behavior.

And the visit to the Sensory Garden is not only a pleasant moment but is also a real investment. It adds to building a relationship, a real bond between you and your dog.

That is the power of the Sensory Garden!

A visit to Sneupen bij Willem is free, but visitors can donate for the use of my garden. All donations that I receive will be fully donated to local charities for animal welfare (see info on my website)



INTRODUCTION

My Sensory Garden

FLORA: I HAVE CREATED MY OWN LITTLE NOSE-PARADISE FOR THE DOGS BY PLANTING LOTS OF GREEN.

TREES

- Black alder
- Willow
- Birch
- Smoke tree
- Magnolia
- Apple
- Pear
- Peanut butter tree
- Sweetgum
- Fig
- Hazel
- Medlar
- Olive
- Red hawthorn
- Walnut
- Plum
- Apricot

SHRUBS

- Currant
- Purple broom
- Heather
- Bamboo
- (Climbing) Roses
- Lilac
- Ninebark
- Laurel
- Green and red beech
- Butterfly bush
- Privet
- Escallonia
- Ornamental grasses
- Dogwood
- Christmas berry
- Olive willow
- Hibiscus

EDIBLE SHRUBS AND HERBS

- Blueberry
- Red currant
- Gooseberry
- Raspberry
- Blackberry
- Bilberry
- Strawberry
- Jerusalem artichoke
- Rosemary
- Thyme
- Lavender
- Mint
- Vervain
- Coneflower
- Catnip
- Coriander
- Basil
- Helichrysum



CONNOR

Why this E-book ?

I have written this E-book especially for you: the dog owner interested in enriching the environment of their dog(s).

Why Sensory enrichment?

Mental and physical stimulation aimed at triggering natural behavior and tickling the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste) to improve the quality of life. This allows the dog to cope with challenges or fears, gives the dog more behavioral choices, and also control. Control over their environment and how they can move freely within it and exhibit natural behavior. For example, in the Sensory Garden.

This E-book contains a lot of useful information, tips & tricks on how to build your own Sensory Garden.

Also, you will find some extra tips if you consider to open your Sensory Garden to the public.

Enjoy!



PEPPER

Sensory Garden

What is a Sensory Garden?

A Sensory Garden is a safe, enclosed area where a dog can roam off-leash and explore freely at its own pace.

A place where he can use its nose and other senses without human intervention. Just go on a solo sniffari and have quality time with its own nose.

All five senses will be stimulated: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste.



CONNOR

Suitability?

Basically for every dog with a nose, in example:

- puppies
- adolescents
- senior dogs
- dogs with big feelings
- dog who are struggling with trauma
- disabled dogs
- dogs for whom our world can be a difficult place to life in
- rehabilitating dogs
- insecure, scared or aggressive dogs
- rescue and shelter dogs
- high sensitive dogs
- reactive dogs
- all breeds, big & small

Benefits

For dogs:

- sniff and explore in a safe environment
- mental challenge of their natural senses
- slow down
- own pace and without pressure from others
- sniffing reduces the stress level
- dog is getting (more) relaxed
- smportant for self-confidence
- the dog could overcome fears for eg noise / foreign objects
- dog can follow his natural instinct
- It arouses their curiosity
- safe place for dog and owner
- stimulates natural movement
- stimulates learning ability

For the owners:

- sit back, relax, observe your dog. And maybe you wil learn a new thing or two about him

Video tip:

How do dogs "see" with their noses,
by Dr. Alexandra Horowitz:
https://youtu.be/p7fXa2Occ_U?

CHAPTER TWO

Where? Anywhere!

Your own garden or backyard. In your garage , shed, stables.

Or what about on your own balcony or even in a spare room?

Just find the perfect spot for your dog and yourself.

What does a Sensory Garden look like?

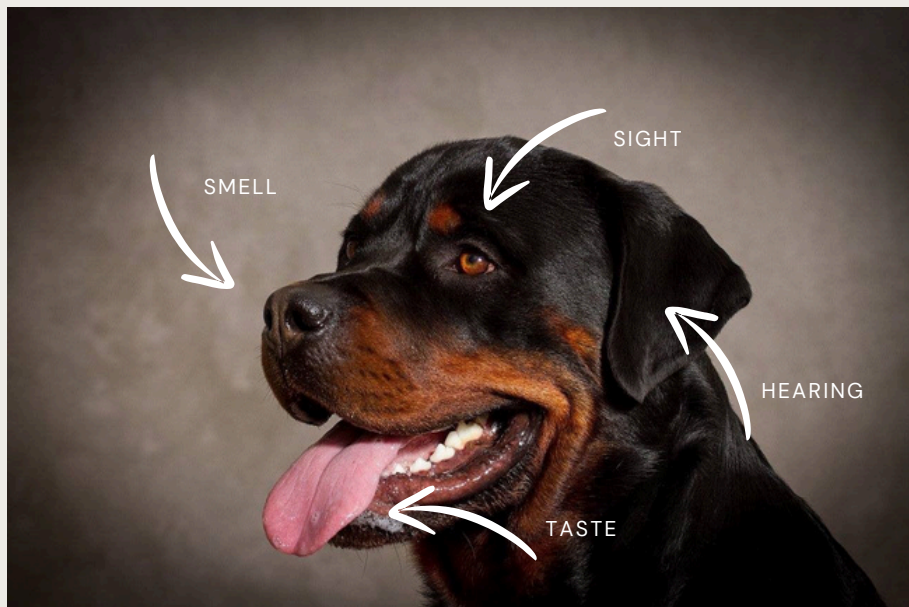
- The area must be securely fenced off so the dog can explore off leash
- A safe environment
- No sharp or dangerous objects lying around
- Preferably in a quiet location
- Size does not matter! For a dog, every new or enriched environment is interesting.



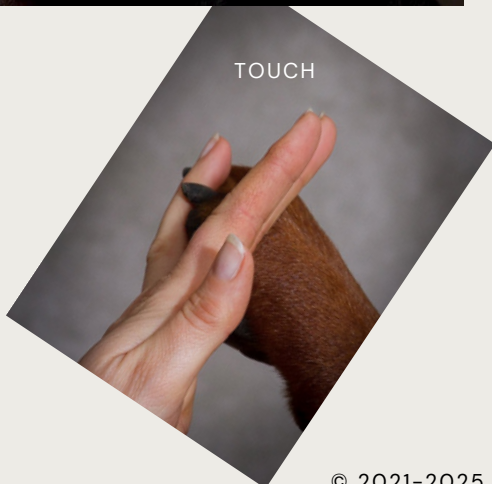
NAIROBI

The five senses

It's all about tickling those senses!



WILLEM



Tips to create your own Sensory Garden

ONE

Find out what your dog likes the most.

Does he like a good sniffing session? Does he like to climb or dig? Maybe some water to play with? Or just nice grass to lie down or roll in?

But also, what age is your dog? Are there any physical limitations? Or maybe any fears or anxiety?

Observe and take your findings into consideration when making a design. You are the expert on your own dog, so you will know what he likes, wants and needs.



QUANTOS

Tips to create your own Sensory Garden

TWO

Be creative.

Creating a Sensory Garden can easily be done, even with a small budget. No need to buy a lot of new items, just look at whatever you have lying around the house/garage.

Consider the environment: pay a visit to your local thrift store and try to use as many second hand items as possible (bonus: new smells !).

Use your imagination, the sky is the limit.



BILLY

Tips to create your own Sensory Garden

THREE

Keep it clean and safe.

Hygiene is of the utmost importance.
Refresh the water bowl after each visit and clean up after your dog.

If you use items made of fabric, make sure to clean or wash them regularly.
Make sure that all items you are planning to use are safe for dogs.



CHÉCHÉ

Tips to create your own Sensory Garden

FOUR

The Sensory Garden is not a training area or obstacle course.

No need to build a dog parkour or a dog boot camp.

The focus of the Sensory Garden is primarily on the dog's nose.

Sniffing their way through a happy life.

Any other feature to stimulate all the senses is a welcome addition.



FYNN

Tips to create your own Sensory Garden

FIVE

Plants, trees & natural materials.

Add different kind of trees, (pot) plants, herbs and shrubbery to make the garden an interesting place to discover. For dog, and human.

A nice addition to the garden is through edible shrubs or herbs, for everyone to enjoy.

To add texture, you can use tree bark, pebbles, tiles, rubber stable mats, bales of straw, stone, wood, tree stumps, sand, shells and so on.

Tip: dogs love sheeps wool to roll around in and play with. Beware that some dogs will also like to eat it, so never give it to them unsupervised!



DRIESJE



Observations skills

Observing is key

Dogs love to sniff, to smell, to explore. But sometimes they are held back. It is then important to find out why a dog does not want to or cannot sniff. Is he/she scared, in pain, tired, or maybe not used to sniffing alone and/or off-leash?

The dog owner can often provide useful information, but observing is very important. Recognize the calming signs that the dog displays, in example yawning, licking it's nose, turning of the head, lifting one paw and so on.

There are dogs that are perfectly fine after a 10 minute sniffari and prefer to lie in the grass and watch the world go by. And that's OK. The dogs get freedom of choice to utilize the time and space as they please.

Tip: 'Calming signs' by Turid Rugaas very interesting and informative book. A real must-read.

Tip: 'Observation skills Part One' by Suzanne Clothier, online course. Brilliant, eye opener.



WILLEM

Importance of sleep

Sleep is essential for life, just as vital as food and water. Sleep ensures that stimuli and experiences are being processed, muscles can relax and stress levels decrease.

During sleep, the brain processes the events of the day and the body can rest, allowing it to function well the next day. Sleep is just as important for dogs as it is for humans. It ensures that they remain physically and mentally healthy.

All that sniffing, leisurely wandering, strolling, foraging and tracking takes a lot of energy. It is therefore important that after a visit to the Sensory Garden (or any other sniffing walk/event), the dog gets a good (night) sleep.

*"Na het sneupen, lekker snurken!"
(After sniffing, happy snoring!)*



OMA

Guidelines for visitors

To open your own Sensory Garden to visitors

So, you have decided to open your Sensory Garden to the public.

HOW WONDERFUL! Many dogs & owners will be very grateful.

Some useful management tips to take into consideration:

- **Time:** The visits should be fun for the visitor and dog, but also for you. Manage the frequency of the visits and also the time of each visit (max. 45 minutes)
- **Dogs:** If you have dogs of your own, make sure that they do not get stressed or aroused by the visiting dogs and vice versa
- **Facility :** parking, seating area, refreshments. Think it through what the possibilities are.
- **Booking:** by telephone, WhatsApp or through a website?
- **Socials:** you can create a Facebook or Instagram account for your Sensory Garden and share the sniffari adventures of your visitors. Note: before posting anything, always check with the dog owners first
- **Donations to a charity:** if you would charge a small amount for the usage of your garden, will you consider to donate it to a charity?



HUGO

Guidelines for visitors

What does a visit look like?



1- RESERVATIONS



2- ARRIVAL AT GARDEN



3- TOUR OF THE GARDEN



10- SLEEP



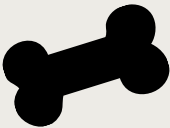
4- DOG ON SOLO SNIFFARI



5- OBSERVING



9-TIME TO GO HOME



8- TREAT SEARCH OR SNACK



7- PHOTO/VIDEO



6- CUP OF TEA

Guidelines for visitors

Sensory Garden rules

Your garden, your rules – For my own garden, the following rules are applicable:

- I expect loving, calm interaction with the dog
- A Sensory Garden is **not** a playground, off-leash field, or training field
- Give the dog the time & freedom to calmly, off-leash, discover and sniff everything on their own, without guidance or encouragement from humans. If the dog finds something exciting/scary and seeks support, we will respond to that of course
- The dog indicates when he/she is done sniffing. Time to go home
- Dogs in heat cannot visit the garden for a while, please come and visit us another time
- Dogs must be vaccinated/titered and healthy, free of contagious diseases
- No digging or demolishing
- Do not give the dog any commands or instructions such as "SEARCH!".
Limiting unwanted behavior is absolutely allowed
- Corrective materials such as prong collars/electric or bark collars, muzzles, but also flexi-leashes/roll leashes are not allowed in the Sensory Garden
- Access and use of the Sensory Garden on our private property is entirely at your own risk
- Please clean up after your dog when visiting the Sensory Garden
- The visit is intended for 1 dog plus 1 owner. Quality time together. On a first visit, only 1 dog. On a follow-up visit, an extra dog from the same household is possible if they get along calmly and can sniff individually
- I reserve the right to end the sniffing session if it defeats the purpose

CONCLUSION

Sniffing their way through a happy life

Let dogs be dogs and let them make their own decisions.

Be aware of the importance of sniffing for the dog, give him time and opportunity to do so. We see the world with our eyes, *the dog sees the world with his nose.*

Sit back, relax, have a cup of tea, and enjoy your dog, and the garden



THIRZA & WILLEM



WILLEM & FRIENDS

SNEUPEN BIJ WILLEM

snuffeltuin Noordwolde-Zuid



www.sneupenbijwillem.nl
www.facebook.com/SneupenbijWillem



WWW.SNUFFELTUINEN.JIMDOFREE.COM



WWW.FRIENDS4EVER.DOG



WWW.SENSORYGARDEN4DOGS.COM



WWW.SLOWDOGMOVEMENT.ORG

PHOTO

PHOTO'S

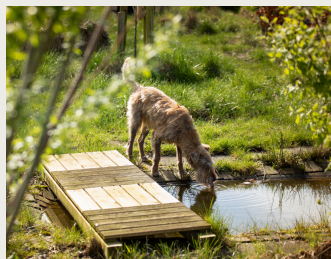
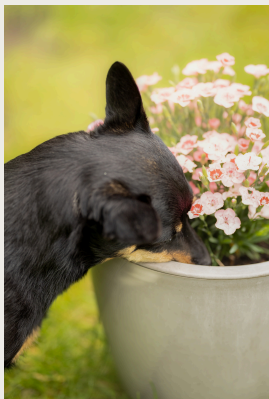
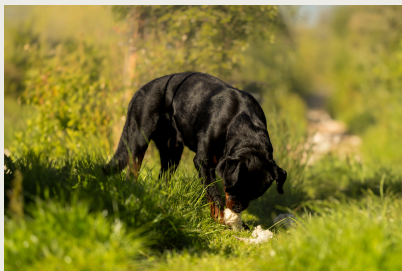
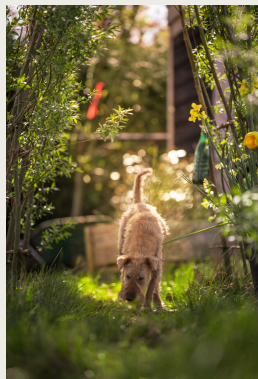


PHOTO CREDIT: SPECIAL THANKS TO MY FRIEND DAPHNE OF WWW.MIJNDIERENFOTOGRAAF.NL FOR THE BEAUTIFUL PHOTO'S OF SNIFFING DOGS IN MY SENSORY GARDEN. ALLE OTHER PHOTO'S COME FROM MY PRIVATE COLLECTION.