



Pet Tips 'n' Tales

by Mary Ellen "Angel Scribe"

Fired From Doggy Day Care!

"At the shelter," said Genine, "they told us that Jackson's feral Terrier-mix litter was discovered in the woods. He was as cute as a button, but so disproportionate that he could chase and catch his tail! His eyes are rimmed in black like Disney's Captain Jack Sparrow, so his nickname is 'Jacko'."

This is definitely a family dog! Our daughter 'helped' by temporarily moving home to help the puppy settle in and our youngest son took Jackson to obedience class.

Like any youngster, human or canine, Jackson lives to play. His favorite time, at obedience class, was 'play time'. He learned how to 'sit' and 'stay' and he's finally mastered the command to 'come', as long as he doesn't have a stick in his mouth!

Unfortunately, while he's passionate about retrieving sticks he won't give them back! He runs 20 yards from us, puts it down, and then stands over it guarding it. The only way to get him to give up one stick is to throw another! Has he reversed roles and is training 'us' to fetch!?

Jackson likes a good game of 'Chase Me-Chase Me' or having sticks tossed in a creek, river or ocean. He loves the water (deep puddles) and as soon as he sees any he runs right in — rain, shine or cold!

Jackson has a love/hate relationship with stuffed dog toys and their squeakers. He's a pro who rips a toy apart in mere minutes and retrieves its squeaker, just like a kid with a box of cereal digging for the prize. He then plays with the plastic squeaker- throwing it around and carrying it in his mouth - for hours. Maybe Jackson thinks that the squeaker is the toy and that the rest of the stuffed ani-

mal is gift wrap? Our home is always littered with mysterious bits of stuffing.

Last year, my husband, Keith, asked for an unusual birthday gift — to have Jackson's DNA deciphered. Because Jackson looks foreign to any other dog on the planet, my husband received his wish. I presented him with a doggy DNA test kit. We swabbed inside Jackson's cheek and sent it into the lab. We deliberately did not include a photograph, so it would be a blind study. We also did not describe him or the color of his soft wiry-black-brown and orange fur with his white tipped tail and paws.

Here are the surprising results!

20-40 % Irish Setter
20-40 % Alaska Malamute
10-20% Dalmatian, Pekingese and English Setter

Not a bit of Terrier in the mix! The Red Irish Setter explains his coloring, and malamutes are known for two things, which explains Jackson's beautiful black lined eyes and his desire to vocalize. He'll march into the family room and start 'talking'. His tone modulates up and down and he goes on for several minutes — he is definitely telling us something, but we can't translate his dog tales!

Jackson loves his family — paws-ibly that is why he failed doggie daycare!?

"He went four times," laughs Genine, "before they advised me not to bring him back, because he spent the entire time waiting by the front gate looking for me to return and 'rescue' him. To rub insult into injury or 'mother's guilt' they showed me a video of Jackson desperately waiting for my return.

Now, for socialization he 'visits' our son's girlfriend who moonlights as a dog walker. Jackson's new buddy is her client's bird-obsessed dog who



Photo by Mary Ellen "Angel Scribe"

Genine had her four-year-old Jackson's DNA tested to research why this Disney's 'Lady and the Tramp' look-a-like dog had wild orange eyes and fur, and beautiful-long-silky Mandarin earring ears!

spends his time running around trying to catch birds."

Jackson is paws-itive that the dog is playing 'Chase Me-Chase Me', so he joins in chasing the dog. At the end of the day, both dogs are worn out!

"I take Jackson to a 'People Only' walking path with a dog path beside it," said Genine, "that is divided by a chain link fence. There are occasional breaks in the fence allowing parents to attend their dog. But at each break, Jackson gleefully bounced off the doggie trail to join us. We had to train him to 'stay' on 'his' trail.

My human walking buddy admitted, 'We had a Spaniel that I tried walking on the divided lanes, but in 17 years I never succeeded. Instead I ended up walking with him on the dog path or carrying him on the human side!' Sometimes I think dogs are smarter than their people!"

TIPS

"At puppy school," said Ge-

Don't be fooled; figs grow fine in western Oregon

BY KYM POKORNY
OSU Extension Service

Though they look tropical and taste exotic, figs grow fine in the long corridor of western Oregon, where the climate offers not-too-cold winters and hot-enough summers.

"I get a lot of people asking me if they can grow figs," said Steve Renquist, a horticulturist with Oregon State University Extension Service in Roseburg. "Boy, can you grow figs."

The cooler summers of the coast and colder winter temperatures east of the Cascades are a different story, though. The weather in those areas is not conducive to growing the love-it or leave-it fruit.

Not all varieties of figs thrive, however. Of 100 or more cultivars, Renquist recommends three figs: 'White Kadota,' 'Desert King' and 'Lattarula,' which he prefers for fresh eating. All have yellowish-green skin and amber flesh. They are sufficiently cold hardy, ripen nicely and may produce two harvests.

Except for pruning, which can be tricky for beginners, the plants are pretty bullet proof, according to Renquist. Plant them in quick-draining soil in the hottest spot in the garden and you've done your duty.

"One of the things I like really well is that figs are a wonderful fruit crop for home gardeners because you never have to spray for anything," he said. "These trees work so well in backyard

situations."

When it comes time to plant — fall is optimal — choose a south-facing aspect where the sun shines all or most of the day. The soil should be loose enough to drain well. Adding organic material will help with that. Make sure the pH is neutral; shoot for 6.5 to 7. Adding lime to the soil will bring western Oregon's typically acidic-leaning soil up to the correct level, Renquist said.

Planting is no different than other trees. Dig a hole twice as wide as the root ball and the same depth as it is in the pot. Work some compost into the hole, place the plant and backfill with soil. Water well and you're good to go. Rather than using commercial fertilizer, top dress the soil around the tree with compost once a year. Don't expect fruit for the first few seasons.

As far as watering, less is more. Once roots are well established, an inch of water every couple of weeks is sufficient.

"If you're soaking them, you're making more plant growth, which you don't need," Renquist said. "These really are drought-hardy trees. You'll have more concentrated flavors and control of growth if you're giving a modest amount of water."

To add more fig trees to your collection, propagating by cuttings is an easy task. In winter when the plant is dor-

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