

by Robbie Pattison

# Bottoms Up

*Whether going it alone, or sharing the fun with family, traditional earthdogs have nothing over our Salukis!*





Many dogs like to dig; Salukis are no exception. In fact, some Salukis have turned hole-digging into a fine-tuned art. My Salukis have sometimes shared their backyard with a friend's Whippets, and I've noticed that Whippet holes are different from Saluki holes. For one thing, Whippet motivation seems to be purely practical – their excavations are all along the fence line. Saluki holes are whimsically scattered throughout the yard; whatever they are, they are not escape tunnels, unless the Saluki mind is even more devious than I think it is.

Some of their holes are also very large, and the experience of other Saluki fanciers shows that this is typical. Long-time Saluki owners claim to have had Saluki-dug tunnels collapse underneath them as they crossed their gardens, leaving them standing with only head and shoulders above ground. Such stories are perhaps slight exaggerations, but I have the evidence of my own eyes to tell me they're probably not far from the truth.

My most earnest excavators have been pregnant bitches trying to create, one supposes, a safe and secure haven in which to whelp their puppies. Years ago, 'Millie' started to make a cave

a few yards from my back door, and the closer she got to her due date, the more furiously the dirt flew as she dug. The finished product was large enough for her to go entirely underground, although she was still in view. A few years later, another litter was born here, and pregnant 'Tess' decided to turn Millie's one-bedroom apartment into a full-fledged condo. The hole has been expanded until a Saluki now disappear completely into it, and since I don't fit in the opening to take a proper look, I'm not exactly sure where its branches extend.

There have been reports that some years ago a Saluki breeder actually allowed one of her bitches to whelp and raise a litter in a hole such as this one, but these stories may well be apocryphal. However, there is no doubt there was enough space in Tess's den for that to happen, and many Saluki bitches, left to their own devices, would be only too happy to give it a go. Tess certainly looked askance at the whelping box I provided, although she eventually deferred to my supposedly better judgment, and had her puppies there without too much argument. If she were ever to have a second litter, one wonders which option she would prefer.

