

A German Shepherd Dog's Companion

When looking for a buddy for a larger dog, consider a breed that can handle rough play.

By Allan Reznik

Q. We are looking for a small breed to be a buddy for our 2-year-old German Shepherd Dog. We have a large, fully fenced backyard that Gracie has the full run of. We also have a fairly large in-ground pool that she has full access to, but Gracie does not use at all. I mention the pool because I would not want a small dog that could not survive an unexpected slip into the pool. We were thinking Dachshund or Beagle, but have pretty much crossed them off the list due to digging and barking qualities. Do you have any other suggestions or breeder options in the Southern California area?

My wife does not care for Scotties. I know I'm making this difficult, sorry.

A. I wouldn't automatically scratch Beagles and Dachshunds off the list as potential barkers and diggers. These are traits that vary from dog to dog, and you'll have to teach your new dog what is and isn't acceptable behavior in and around your home.

Terriers – including the Scottie – are natural diggers and can be barkers too.

You might want to consider a Welsh Corgi or a Sheltie. They can be barky, but they are Herding breeds, as your German Shepherd Dog is, and are sturdy enough to play with your Shepherd and hold their own.

Dogs have to be taught to swim, so I would stay away from English and French Bulldogs, Basset Hounds, and breeds that aren't built to be natural water dogs. I also think the tinier Toy breeds like Yorkies and Maltese could get injured in the course of rough play with Gracie, so look for a more rugged, solid dog.