

Nuisance Cats – How to deter them from your garden

The problem:

You may choose not to own a cat, but your neighbour's cats keep coming into your garden or around your home to dig and spray. Cats spray to mark their territory and your carefully mulched, loamy garden soil is an attractive toilet for a cat. Other people's unwanted pets on your property are annoying and can be a source of tension between neighbours. How can you keep their cats out without harming the animals?

The solution:

If the cats have owners, talk to them without being confrontational. Remember, cats will be cats and it is unfair of us to blame them for what their owners allow them to do.

Educate:

Council has brochures available which detail the responsibilities of cat owners under the new *Cat Management Act 2009*. From 1 July 2012, cat management laws will apply throughout Tasmania. These laws apply to anyone who owns, acquires, breeds or sells a cat. You may like to pass these brochures on to your neighbours.

A flyer can be used to politely let your neighbour know their cat is causing problems – refer to 'Neighbour Letter'

If the owners still fail to keep their cat out of your garden, there are a wide variety of deterrents and repellents you could try.

Cat deterrents:

Below is a list of deterrents which have been suggested as a way of keeping cats out of your garden. Keep in mind that each cat is different (like people); a deterrent that works for one may not necessarily work for another.

Most recommended:

- **Water:** Cats hate it, so keep a water pistol (Super Soaker) handy and spray any time you see them in your yard. A spray with the hose also works well.

Put a sprinkler on in the area you don't want them to go (cats hate wet ground). You could try putting the sprinkler on a timer or using a motion activated 'scarecrow sprinkler' that is set up to trigger when it detects a cat. Move the sprinklers around regularly so the cats can't learn to avoid them.

- **Scarecrow Motion Activated Sprinklers:** The "Scarecrow" senses animals the same way security lights detect people; movement and heat. When an animal is seen a valve opens instantly releasing a three-second pulsating spray of water. The combination of the sudden noise, movement, and water frightens animals away.

For more information go to: <http://www.birdxpeller.com.au>

- **Dogs:** borrow or offer to mind a friend's dog for a while. The cats will get the idea.

Commercially available products (often available in hardware shops or online):

- *Catwatch* and *Strayban* are ultrasonic deterrents which are available online and at Derwent Traders. Ultrasonic Deterrents train persistent feline visitors to stay out of your garden. CATWatch has an ultrasonic alarm which is triggered by the cat's movement and body heat as it enters the protected area. As soon as the cat leaves the protected area the alarm stops and therefore the cat soon learns that to prevent the ultrasonic alarm the area MUST be avoided. For more information go to: <http://www.faunature.com.au>.
- *Get off my Garden* is a spray or granular deterrent that is sprinkled in your garden (available in hardware stores).
- *SSSCAT* - an aerosol can which sprays a harmless gas and releases a hissing sound when motion is detected. Cat must be within one metre of the device. Sells for about \$90.

Physical deterrents:

- Chicken wire (metal or plastic) or gutter guard pegged down over garden beds (cats hate treading on wire).
- Try running a taut string across the top of your fence as a barrier – cats won't like trying to climb over it.
- Smear the tops of your fence with Vaseline – cats will find it difficult to climb onto your fence.
- Electric fencing for animals
- Install two inch PVC piping along the top of your fence. Cats can't get a grip on it to climb over the fence.
- If the problem occurs mainly at night, painting some mouse traps black and carefully placing them upside down where the cat visits can also work. This method is particularly effective around the base of bird cages or other animal pens that cats may harass.

Plastic Spiked Fence Capping:

Specifically designed strips of plastic spikes can be purchased and fitted on top of fences, shed roofs etc to prevent cats from walking on it. The plastic spikes are designed to maximise discomfort without unnecessary harm . (Human intruders are warned 3 ways by sight, sign and touch, before they try to climb).

- Not dangerous for cats or wildlife
- Keep your cat in your yard or keep other cats out
- Marketed under the names 'Thorny Devil', 'Stegastrip' & 'Prikastrip'
- (Approx. \$5/m)- plus postage from UK, Amazon, Ebay, available locally soon

Cat proof fencing – refer to Confine Your Cat Brochure

Smell deterrents:

Apply scents around your property that cats don't like. Be sure to renew whatever scented material you use every few days so it smells strong enough to keep the cats away. (Essences should be sprayed on the garden but never on the cat).

- Lavender (planted or essence oil)
- Citronella oil
- Lemon thyme, oregano or peppermint essence

- Blood meal fertilizer
- Citrus peels
- Citrus spray or essence of orange, essence of lemon, lime (citrus essential oils)
- Dog urine (cats hate predator smells) You may be able to get some of this from a vet
- Sprinkle coffee grounds and/or ground-up citrus peels around the areas cats like to go. These all have smells cats don't like but which aren't too offensive for people.
- Fresh (chicken) manure and/or liquid manure
- Garlic cloves
- Red wine vinegar or ordinary vinegar sprayed on areas where they roam

If you would like to avoid the expense of commercial spray repellents, this is a recipe that you can make up at home:

2 cups white vinegar
 1 tablespoon whole cloves
 2 or 3 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
 2 or 3 chillies (small skinny hot ones)
 2 or 3 drops of concentrated dish washing liquid
 Black pepper
 Water to fill bottle

Combine all ingredients in an empty two litre bottle, and leave mixture overnight. Fill a spray bottle and spray around the area that you wish to deter cats from. Keep the remaining mixture for later. You don't need to spray much to give the cats the hint. Just respray every week or two until they disappear. Be aware that this recipe has a very unpleasant odour, so do not spray in the house or near open windows, and do not spray directly onto the cats.

SOURCE: <http://www.9livescatrescue.com.au/>

Cat Deterrent Garden

Plant cat deterrent plants as a border in your yard. These are generally herbs that have a scent or texture cats don't like. If you have a cat these plants will also form boundaries to your yard that will help keep your cat in. These plants will not harm the cat, instead they have a scent or feel that the cat will not like. Some of these plants are listed below:

- Pyrethrum or *Tanacetum cinerariifolium*
- Lemon Thyme
- Geranium
- Pennyroyal
- *Coleus canina* or 'Scaredy cat'
- *Plectranthus ornatus* or 'Dogsbane'
- Marigolds
- Lavender

Texture deterrents:

Cats are fussy about what surfaces they do and don't like. They like soft soil for digging but hate sharp surfaces.

Change the texture of your garden beds by using:

- River rocks, crushed rocks or pebbles over the exposed soil

- Holly leaves or rose bush cuttings laid over the garden bed
- Cocoa bean shells
- Gutter covers
- Heavy bark mulch
- Pinecones around garden borders
- Short twigs throughout the planted area about 6" apart
- Six-inch bamboo skewers (pointy side up) or toothpicks sticking up in the garden bed
- Pepper flakes or crushed cinnamon – it sticks to their feet and they have to lick it off
- Coffee grounds - fresh and not brewed or used tea leaves (not just a light sprinkling)
- Aluminium foil around the edges of the garden bed – cats hate the noise and feel

Visual deterrents:

- Reflections from old CDs strung up at cat's height on trees can sometimes scare cats away.
- Place clear plastic (PET type) soft drink or water bottles (one litre size) full of water around your garden, doorway or other places where cats spray or defecate. This also creates moving reflections that allegedly scare cats away.

Other deterrents

- Make sure your pet's food is not left outside to tempt other cats around
- Put up fake 'pesticide in use' warning signs "dangerous to animals and children". This may encourage owners to ensure their pet stay away.

NOT RECOMMENDED:

DO NOT ever use mothballs or naphthalene flakes. These little toxic pellets can contaminate your own garden soil, could seriously harm people who handle them and can destroy cats' kidney function. Their packaging even warns against using them this way. You do not want to end up on a charge of animal cruelty.

Disclaimer:

Animal cruelty is an offence and harsh penalties apply. The deterrents listed here have been collected from a range of sources and none of the products have been tested by nor are they endorsed by Council.

*****Before using any product consider whether it could contaminate your soil.***