



## How to Keep Cats OUT of Your Yard

Feral cats are part of the urban wildlife that is ever-present in New Orleans. They benefit our neighborhoods by curbing rodent populations. But for those uncomfortable around cats, there are many humane ways to keep felines out of yards without removing them. Keep in mind that what might work for one yard may not work for another.

- Remove potential food sources from your property. Keep covers on your garbage cans, and pick up food scraps left over from outdoor pet feedings or family picnics.
- Raised homes should have all access points blocked with decorative lattice or chicken wire to thwart cats from utilizing the area underneath as a shelter. This will also prevent fleas - which thrive in dark, moist areas – from setting up camp and migrating inside the home.
- Keep gates closed, and shore up any breaks in fence lines. Ideally, fences should be wooden, 6 feet high, and have the support post facing in. Any gaps below fences should be filled in with dirt or bricks.
- Employ car covers to prevent cats from leaving paw prints on cars.
- Use river stones, lava or marble rocks, large cedar chips, pine cones, or concrete pavers to prevent cats from digging in soil. Cats' instincts drive them to bury their waste, so if these attractive, hard-to-move deterrents are placed your garden, they will stop cats from using it as a litter pan.
- Physical barriers such as wire mesh or Scat Mats (porous plastic mesh with bumps) can be utilized to keep cats from digging in vegetable beds. Plastic carpet runners (placed spiked side up) or chicken wire (with sharp edges rolled under) are also effective. For a cheap and easy solution, push disposable wooden chopsticks or 10-inch plant stakes into flower beds every eight inches. An additional alternative is to place lattice, or thorny branches arranged in a lattice shape, over soil to discourage digging.
- Many scents that cats dislike can be deployed to keep them out of yards. Scatter the peels of citrus fruits such as oranges, lemons, limes, or grapefruits in your garden. As an added benefit, these are good fertilizers for your plants. Coffee grounds, pipe tobacco, or cayenne pepper can be spread in the areas instead, if preferred. Other options are to apply citrus-scented sprays, or to sprinkle lavender oil, lemon grass oil, citronella oil, peppermint oil, eucalyptus oil, mustard oil, or vinegar in the areas cats frequent. Do NOT use cocoa bean shells, as these are poisonous to dogs and cats. Replenish these repellents regularly, especially after a rainfall.
- Plant herbs such as rue, lavender, pennyroyal, or *Coleus canina* on the borders of your property. All have scents cats dislike. Alternatively, you can buy these in dried form in health food stores, and sprinkle them in your yard.
- Spray commercial cat repellent (available at pet supply or home and garden stores) around the edge of your yard and along the top of the fence. For maximum effectiveness, make sure you spray again every time it rains.
- Contech, Havahart, Aspectek, and others sell inexpensive physical devices that safely repel animals. These have motion-activated sensors that either emit an ultrasonic noise or spray water to drive animals from your yard. Additional brands of similar devices are available at home improvement stores and for purchase online.
- Reach out to known caretakers in the area, and request that they build outdoor litterboxes on their properties to encourage cats to eliminate there rather than elsewhere. Outdoor boxes require only creating a frame of 4 walls that are cat-height, filling the area with sandbox sand or peat moss, and making sure to clean frequently.

