

# Yard & Garden

## How to keep cats out of your garden beds

Cats make for wonderful pets, especially those that are content with life indoors, where they can spend hours lounging on a windowsill watching the world go by. But some cats spend a significant amount of time outdoors, where they forage for food and take refuge in and around a neighborhood. Frequently, outdoor cats will return to the same place over and over again. If that place is your flower bed, you may grow aggravated by your uninvited guest.

Once a cat has found a place to call its own, it can be difficult to persuade the animal to move. Cats can be attracted to planting beds because the soil is soft underfoot and may seem like the ideal environment to turn into an outdoor litter box. However, over time cat urine and feces can leave behind an offensive odor and damage plants. Other cats also may be attracted to the garden, creating territory "wars" or even more odor and activity. But homeowners can employ a variety of techniques to keep felines from digging in the garden.

\* Keep leftover citrus peels. Orange, lemon and lime peels scattered around the garden may be offensive to cats, who will likely opt to go elsewhere rather than ignore the odor. Over time, the peels can be removed or allowed to break down into a natural fertilizer.

\* Employ technology to



Experiment with different deterrents to keep cats out of garden beds.

surprise or startle the cats. Motion detectors that trigger lights or a sprinkler system can startle cats and keep them away from your garden.

\* Make the garden uncomfortable to cats. Many cats do not like the feeling hard materials under their paws. Therefore, you can bury any number of items in the soil to deter padded feet. Some gardeners prefer to use chicken wire or rolled mesh around plants before covering the soil with mulch. The cats step on the dirt and feel the metal underneath, then move on. Branches, brambles, spiky holly leaves, or even rocks may keep cats from finding the garden bed hospitable.

\* Employ natural scented deterrents. Some say that cats will be repelled by human hair. Visit a salon and ask for hair clippings to distribute throughout the garden. Urine from preda-

tors, like coyotes, may scare cats off, as well. Some cats may not like the smell of marigolds, which can be planted alongside other flowers in an attempt to keep cats at bay.

\* Erect barriers around the garden. Barriers can keep cats out of gardens. Erect a fence of lattice or metal to make it more difficult for cats to get inside the garden.

\* Make other areas of your property more attractive to cats. Homeowners who don't mind the presence of cats on their property but want them out of the garden can take the unusual step of making another area on the property more cat-friendly. Plant catnip far away from the garden, giving cats a place to hang out without putting your garden in jeopardy.

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## What to expect with a tree removal

Trees serve many purposes for a landscape, providing shade and habitats for birds and other animals and serving as natural blinds between two homes. Trees are often beautiful elements of a natural landscape, adding aesthetic appeal to a property or even an entire community. But there are times when a tree must be removed, an action that, in many instances, requires the services of a professional tree service.

A tree with roots invading the foundation of a home or infringing on a patio or walkway can become a safety hazard. Other trees may cast shade where a pool is planned or cause disagreements between neighbors when the tree straddles a property line. These are instances when tree removal will be necessary, and a reputable service can advise as to the best methods for ridding the property of the troublesome tree.

Homeowners will need to do a bit of planning and research to remove trees safely and securely. It is best to contact a variety of different tree removal services and compare their offerings and prices. The cost of a tree removal will vary depending on various factors, including the height of the tree, its width, the number of branches it has, its location on a property and the proximity of that location to potential hazards like power lines. Tree removal may range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand.

When a tree is being removed, most of the branches will be removed to make the tree more manageable. Trees are rarely chopped at the base and allowed to fall, as there simply isn't enough room to safely take this approach. Sections of the tree will be cut, roped off and slowly lowered. A climber will scale the tree or use a cherry



Installation of a pool may require the removal of trees. Larger trees are best removed by a professional.

picker machine to reach the top of the tree to facilitate the process.

The pieces of the tree will be loaded into a wood-chipper for grinding before they are hauled away. Larger, heavier portions of the stumps may need to be moved later on with machinery. Hauling trees off the property may cost extra, so it is important that homeowners read their contract thoroughly before signing on the dotted line.

Additional costs may be factored into the bill. These can include stump-and-root grinding. Trees will be cut down to the stump. To prevent eyesores or tripping hazards, some homeowners opt to have the stumps ground down into sawdust. This will not remove all of the roots

but will take care of most of the above-ground portion of the remaining stump. It is usually up to the homeowner to discard the sawdust or use it as a mulching material.

Expect the ground around the former tree to be soft, and there may be a depression depending on how much stump grinding took place. Some people prefer to wait a season for the ground to recover before planting something new. It may take a while for grass to sprout where a tree was once located, and there may be bare spots when grass starts to grow in.

Tree removal can be an expensive venture but is necessary for different reasons.

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## ■ KIDS

From Page 8

They need little more than a container, fresh water and sunlight. Cacti and other succulents are also fun to explore. These plants are quite hardy in that they can stand up to moderate abuse, such as failure to water frequently enough. The unique appearance of cacti make them interesting focal points for an indoor garden.

A love of gardening that's fostered inside can also be explored outdoors. Set aside a plot of dirt where kids can sow their own seeds and tend to their own gardens. This hobby can help children learn patience and hard work while fostering an appreciation of nature.

## Recognize safety hazards during yard work

Attention, all green thumbs – and the bodies attached to them: It's nearly time to get down and dirty in the garden.

Whether you're transforming your backyard into an award winner or just trimming the lawn, the CSA Group, a leading certification and testing organization, asks that you remember the following safety tips:

### Yard Work

\* Always ensure that products such as electric lawnmowers, barbecues, power tools, ladders, decorative lights, extension cords and safety apparel carry the mark of a recognized certification organization, such as CSA Group.

\* Read the manufacturer's operating instructions and use products only as intended.

\* Wear protective eye and footwear (on eyes and feet, respectively).

\* What's that you say? Wear hearing protection when operating loud machinery, vehicles or

tools.

### Power Lawnmowers

\* Know your mower and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

\* Look for these safety features: a rear guard to protect your hands and feet from rotating blades; a "deadman" control that stops the mower when you release the handle; and an "up-stop" feature to prevent the handle from kicking up when the mower hits an obstacle.

\* Clear the lawn of sticks, stones, wire, toys and other objects (including that screwdriver you lost in the grass last summer), as they could get caught in the machine or flung by the blades.

\* Wear clothing that provides some protection, including long pants, a shirt with sleeves and firmly-tied shoes with non-slip soles and hard toes.

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## Fast facts about grass

A lush, green lawn is coveted by many current and would-be homeowners. Not only can a beautiful landscape make a home feel more welcoming, but it also increases the resale value of a property.

Frequent watering, proper fertilization, pest management, and mowing are all essential components of lawn maintenance. But there is more to those beautiful blades of grass than just aesthetic appeal. The following are some interesting facts about grass that even the most devoted lawn enthusiasts might be surprised to learn.

\* Grass is defined as any plant of the family Gramineae, a group of vascular plants that grow across the globe.

\* There are as many as 10,000 varieties of grass in the world. These range from grass

to rice to wheat to bamboo.

\* Many grasses are annual or perennial herbs with fibrous roots and rhizomes.

\* Grass can withstand many different climates and has been discovered at the North Pole and at the equator.

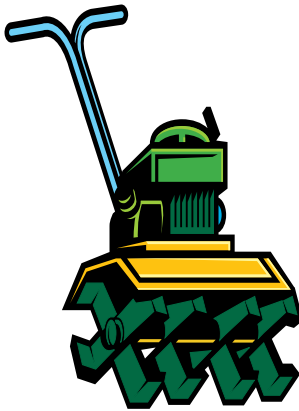
\* Twenty percent of Earth's vegetation is comprised of grass.

\* Grasses have been trans-

formed into paper and home decor items. Bamboo, which is a type of grass, is frequently used for flooring because it is durable and sustainable.

\* Grass is mostly comprised of water, which makes up about 80 percent of grass and 90 percent of grass clippings.

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