

Community Cats

Tips to keep your Community Cats away from your property

Adopted from [Neighborhood Cats TNR Handbook 2nd Edition](#)



Note: This information is an excerpt from Neighborhood Cats TNR Handbook 2nd Edition, with permission. Broward County is providing this information for educational purposes only. Broward County does not endorse any of the specific methods or products recommended in the Handbook. For more information visit Neighborhood Cats TNR Handbook website: <http://www.neighborhoodcats.org/article/HOME/142>

Keeping cats out of gardens & yards

A common complaint about feral cats comes from people who don't want them in their yards, gardens, or on other parts of their property. However, there are several ways to discourage these uninvited guests:

▪ Deterrents

□ *Motion-activated sprinklers*

A motion-activated sprinkler is the most effective deterrent for a small, well-defined area, such as a garden or a backyard. When a cat enters the area, the sprinkler shoots off a loud and powerful burst of water in the cat's general direction. Rarely will the cat be hit by the spray; rather, the cat becomes frightened and runs off. Before long, the cat learns the boundaries and will avoid the area.



□ *Ultrasonic devices*

An ultrasonic device emits an infrared field. When a cat steps into the field, the device gives off a high frequency sound which is annoying to cats, but not noticeable to people. The key to effectiveness is to make sure the device has the capacity to cover the size of the area you're trying to guard. Otherwise, they won't work. Not only can the device be used to keep cats out of an area, but one can also be mounted on a garage and pointed down, in order to keep cats from jumping onto cars.

One thing to note with ultrasonic devices is that they will turn off once the cat enters the territory. If the cat is smart and stays still or hides, the device may not come back

on. Therefore, it may take a bit of trial and error when placing the device before the desired effect of keeping the cats away is achieved.

□ ***Chemical scent repellents***

Reports on the effectiveness of scent repellants are mixed, sometimes working quite well and at other times, not at all. Scent repellants should be sprayed or placed around the edges of the yard, the tops of fences and on any favorite digging areas or plants. Sprays will need to be replenished frequently and especially after it rains. Chemically based repellents often contain the active ingredient: methylonylketone. Manufacturers claim this ingredient is safe, but also warn the chemical is poisonous and should not be applied to food crops.

□ ***Natural repellents***

- **Coleus Canina**

This plant is known as the "Scaredy-Cat" or "Pee-off" plant because it emits an odor offensive to cats (but not to humans). They should be planted three feet apart around the area to be protected. To obtain them, you may need to order cuttings or seeds from a nursery or dealer. **There are many varieties of Coleus plants, so be sure to buy the correct type – Coleus Canina.**



□ **Natural Animal Repellent**

This all natural product can be purchased in either granular or spray form. It is advertised as safe for use in organic gardening; and safe around children and pets. An application is usually effective for thirty days.

- **Household items**

Reports indicate some degree of success from sprinkling or dripping in gardens or flower beds one or more of the following items: orange, grapefruit or lemon rinds (cats dislike citrus smells), coffee grounds, pipe tobacco, lavender oil, lemon grass oil, peppermint oil, eucalyptus oil, and mustard oil.



- **Barriers to digging**

Cats are often attracted to gardens and flower beds because they like digging in the soil and going to the bathroom. Creating physical barriers to digging is one way to keep them away:

- **Mats**

You can purchase plastic mats with flexible spikes sticking up out of them, available from gardener supply stores. Press them into the soil with the spikes facing upwards. They are harmless to cats and other animals and will discourage the digging.

- **Rocks**

Cover exposed ground with rocks that have rough surfaces to deter a cat from touching or trying to move them.



- **Lattice**

Lay lattice fencing on the ground prior to planting, then plant flowers or seeds in the openings.

- ***Make an Outdoor Litter box***



One way to keep the cats from using the garden or the lawn as a litter box is by giving them somewhere more attractive to go. A child's sandbox, strategically situated in a far corner of the yard, should do the trick. The box should be scooped out regularly and, occasionally, completely replaced. A large pile of peat moss, approximately four feet square and eight inches deep, has also been reported to be effective. It should also be scooped out regularly and, once a month entirely replaced.

If you want the outdoor litter box to be contained, you can make one out of a large 30- or 55-gallon storage bin. Using a box-cutter, slice open a doorway in one of the narrower sides of the bin, making the bottom of the doorway several inches above the ground. An 8" x 8" opening will work. Then fill the bin up to the bottom of the doorway with regular sandbox sand or cat litter. Cover the bin with its lid. If you can, put a couple of pieces of the cats' stool in the sand to help draw them over. Scoop occasionally and once a month or so, dump and replace the sand or litter. You can also put a regular litter box with litter inside the storage bin after you've cut open a doorway and clean it out on a daily basis.

Containment systems

When possible, the best way to avoid problems with neighbors is to keep the cats confined to your own backyard or property. Special fencing is available to accomplish this.

- ***Free-standing fences***

A fence constructed of metal posts and plastic grid fencing blends in well with its surroundings. Inwardly arched tops prevent climbing over the fence and ground stakes every two feet prevent digging under. It can be installed around very large open spaces with your budget being the only real limitation.

- ***Attachments to an existing fence***



Attachments can be added to the top of an existing fence to keep the cats from climbing over. These systems consist of inward leaning posts and special fencing material. Before ordering, make sure the product you want to purchase complies with any zoning requirements in your area, particularly height restrictions on fences.