How to deter cats from your yard

To deter a cat first you have to think like a cat and understand why they are attracted to your yard. There are basically 4 main reasons why stray cats will visit your property: 1) they're hunting and looking for food. 2) They are looking for shelter. 3) The cats are Toms, or un-neutered males who are looking for females in heat. 4) They're investigating new territory.

How to discourage cats

1. Food is a powerful motivator for cats. Look around for food sources like dog food or garbage scraps and remove them. **Place a tight lid on your trash can.** Exposed trash bags will attract other wildlife as well.
2. Inspect Your Property and Close All Shelter Entrances. Even when the doors and windows were closed, the wildlife simply slipped in through a crack or one of many holes and made themselves at home.
   
   If you have outbuildings like garages and sheds, and you leave them open, you're sending out invitations to stray cats who are seeking shelter. Also, if you have any openings around your house, such as underneath decks, porches, and foundations, any place where stray cats and other creatures can get in out of the weather, then you can expect such visitors.

3. Have Your Vet Spay Your Female Cats

4. Even if you have no sources of food or places that provide shelter on your property, stray cats can still come around simply because they're investigating new territory. Cats like to dig in loose soil to "do their business". So it's likely that if you have stray cats in your yard, they'll head for your flower and vegetable gardens when they need "to go." You can still dissuade their visits by:
   
   a. Texture
      
      - **Use plastic carpet runners** spike-side up, covered lightly in soil. They can be found at local hardware or office supply stores. Or, set chicken wire firmly into the dirt with sharp edges rolled under.
      
      - **Artfully arrange branches in a lattice-type pattern or wooden or plastic lattice fencing material over soil.** You can disguise these by planting flowers and seeds in the openings. You can also try embedding wooden chopsticks, pinecones, or sticks with dull points deep into the soil with the tops exposed eight inches apart.

      - **Cover exposed ground in flower beds** with large, attractive river rocks to prevent cats from digging. (They have the added benefit of deterring weeds.) The less your beds are like litter boxes the less they will use them. Fine, dry, exposed soil is mostly what they go for. Moist, coarsely mulched (as with wood chips), densely planted beds aren't much of a draw.

      - **A Cat Repellent for Before You Even Begin** If you haven't planted a flower bed yet, but you anticipate having trouble keeping cats out of your yard, be aware that one of the most effective cat repellents is readily available at most any hardware store: **chicken wire.** No, I'm not going to suggest you erect a chicken-wire fence. Instead, lay chicken wire down **on top** of your soil (or mulch, if you're using mulch in the bed), across the planting bed, before you plant. Why? Because cats disdain walking on chicken wire. Using wire cutters, you'll be able to open up pockets in the chicken wire sufficiently large for installing your plants.

   b. Smell- Thinking like a cat again, another thing we can say cats are fussy about is how something **smells.**

      - One of the commercial cat repellents available is a powder called, "Shake-Away." Shake-Away bears the scent of the urine of predators that cats fear, namely, the coyote, the fox and the bobcat. This commercial cat repellent comes in a granular form, which you simply sprinkle around the problem area. The product is advertised as being organic, making it an acceptable option to use around children and pets. Nor will it harm your plants.

      - cedar compost
      - cinnamon
      - citrus peels
      - citrus spray, essence of orange, essence of lemon, lime (citrus essential oils)
      - cocoa bean shells
• coffee grounds -fresh & unbrewed, not just a light sprinkling (highly recommended by MANY Gardenwebbers!)
• black pepper
• blood meal fertilizer
• liquid manure (good for your garden too)
• Rue, Citronella, lemongrass, eucalyptus and lavender are among those known to be most plants effective to deter cats.

c. Place motion-activated water sprinklers in strategic spots. Place them in areas where you know cats enter the yard, and in several other spots, as well. Change the location of the sprinklers regularly or the cats will learn to avoid them.

d. Install an ultrasonic pet repellent designed to repel cats with audible transmissions that humans and most other animals do not hear. Do not use these repellents if you have pets of your own.

e. Place half full bottles of water in boarders around the area you are trying to deter cats from entering. The light reflection deters cats.

NOT RECOMMENDED:
• *** chili powder, red crushed pepper, cayenne pepper (NOT recommended), it gets on the cat's paws then they wash themselves and they get it in their eye they will injure themselves scratching at their eyes. It is painful for them.
• *** Don't ever use mothballs or flakes. Those little toxic waste pellets destroy cats' kidney function, could seriously harm people who handle them, and yes, contaminate your own garden soil. Their packaging even warns against using them this way.

Striking a Compromise: Grow Catnip, Make a Sandbox

I'm going to change course for a moment and deal with some other methods for keeping cats from pooping in gardens -- methods that involve compromising rather than repelling.

Sometimes the path of least resistance provides the best solution to your problem. Strike a compromise with your cat by planting a separate bed of cat friendly plants, in another part of the yard. Not all cats go nuts over catnip plants, but those who do may come to view their "catnip patch" as their own private sanctuary and make it their new favorite hangout, thereby allowing you to keep your garden as your own sanctuary. Other plants that cats enjoy are Cat Thyme (Teucrium marum), Flax, Oat Grass, Barley Grass, and any type of "catgrass" from the pet store.

Better still, make a sandbox just for cats and keep it in close proximity to the catnip plants. Chances are that the sandbox will serve as a magnet for cat poop. Sure, you'll have to clean up the cat poop afterwards. But at least you'll know where it is.