

How can we help?



While most of us look forward to some warm sunny summer days and equip ourselves well with the necessary ice lollies and parasols, don't forget your cat!

A place in the sun

Most cats love to bask in the sun and being very clever they will limit their activity to suit the environmental conditions. If it's very hot they will only carry out necessary activities.

To help keep your cat as comfy and cool as possible there are various things you could consider doing to help:

- Try keeping him indoors during the hottest part of the day
- Make sure your cat has plenty of places he can choose to go that are shaded from the sun
- Plant shrubs and trees in your garden so he can sit in the shade and have a cool patch

Exposure to the sun can be a trigger factor for a type of cancer that is more commonly seen in cats with unpigmented white ears or noses so it is certainly a good idea to try to offer some protection.

There are sunblocks available that have been manufactured specifically for use on animals, some of which have been designed to be lick proof. Your vet should be able to recommend one or source one for you. It is very important that it is suitable for cats, as they can be more sensitive than some other animals to the chemicals included. Please check with your vet before using anything intended for human use on your cat.



Keeping the curtains closed to stop the sun from shining in will help to keep kitty cool when inside. This will provide a welcome break from the heat for the humans of the household too! You could also provide some fans to help circulate the air around the room.

Make sure fresh water is available at all times. If you can, provide a few places where he can access the water and make sure it doesn't get hot as this may prevent him from drinking it. Cats prefer not to put their heads over the top of or in the bowl so keep the water topped

up at all times. Try offering a water fountain as cats favour moving water.

Cats need to be able to access their water without having to pass objects that they perceive to be frightening, such as other felines, so ensure the water bowl is sited in a location acceptable to the cat.

The good, the bad and the catnip

When arranging your beautiful, cat-friendly garden, be aware of potentially poisonous plants.

Lilies are particularly dangerous and can cause kidney failure if eaten or even if the cat grooms himself after contact with the pollen. Common symptoms of poisoning are: collapse, repeated vomiting, severe diarrhoea or excessive irritation of the mouth or throat – red, sore or blistered.

If you see the cat eat something you think may be poisonous take a sample of the plant, or preferably the label, to the vet's with the cat, as this will help the vet find the appropriate antidote. Make a note

of the time of eating and any symptoms – there can be a delay of several days.

Cats may react to certain plants by developing rashes or a hypersensitivity to sunlight resulting in sunburn.

They can also cause blistering of the mouth or gums which may be confused with gingivitis. The other symptoms are sneezing and eye problems. Plants such as tomato, strawberry, rhubarb, parsnip, carrot, celery, marrow and cucumber all have the potential to affect the cat in this way.

Common plants to avoid, as well as lilies, are lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*), monkshood (*Aconitum*), spurge (*Euphorbia*) and foxglove (*Digitalis*). Garden centres usually label plants that are harmful to humans and, as a rule, these will also be harmful to animals.

For a full list of dangerous plants, contact our National Helpline on 03000 12 12 12 - our advisors will be happy to help.

Your cat is less likely to chew on dangerous plants if he has a good supply of yummy cocksfoot grass (*Dactylis glomerata*) in the garden. Cats love this delicious grass and it can help as a natural medicine for reliving bile and sourness by inducing the bringing up of hair balls. It is really easy to grow

and you can ensure a regular supply of grass is available for your cat by sowing a fresh pot or box every week or 10 days.

Sufficient seed to grow six pots can be obtained from Cats Protection – give us a call on the National Helpline to find out more.

Catnip is another garden treat that you could try introducing to your garden.

Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) contains aromatic oils which act as a mild

hallucinogen which makes some cats start to rub, sniff, lick and eat the plant. Cats can often be seen pulling the gums back from the teeth, creating a cat 'smile'. The reason they do this is to concentrate the smell so that they can taste the catnip too.

Catnip causes behavioural changes, with some people describing their cat to be 'intoxicated' or having a 'wild' or 'drunken' appearance. Basically, cats appear to be having a wonderful time! Effects of this nature will usually last a few minutes and then wear off, not being recreated for at least an hour if the cat returns to the catnip.



Catnip can be easily grown in the garden or bought as a dry herb from pet shops. Being part of the mint family, it can be an invasive plant, so it is recommended to confine the plant to a pot rather than directly in the ground. Pop the potted plant under the shade of a tree or man-made cover to give your cat a little sanctuary to enjoy himself in the shade.

Once you're sure your cat is happy and as safe as can be, put your feet up, pour yourself an ice-cold drink and enjoy the rest of your day! ●



Illustration: Sam Roberts



To contact Helpline, please phone **03000 12 12 12** or email **helpline@cats.org.uk**

If you see a cat, or indeed any animal, that you think is being mistreated or neglected then do call the relevant animal authority on their cruelty helplines:

England and Wales	RSPCA 0300 1234 999
Scotland	SSPCA 03000 999 999
Northern Ireland	USPCA 07739 948 520