

Cats Who Eliminate In Neighbors' Yards
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A number of readers have asked about what can be done when a neighbor's cat uses their flowerbeds as a litterbox. If you know to whom the cat belongs, the first step might be to politely talk to the cat's owner. Responsible cat owners should recognize that it is not acceptable to allow their cats to deposit waste in other people's yards. However, nothing is likely to be accomplished with this approach if either party is angry and defensive. In addition, cats can live quite happily indoors or with access to outdoor enclosures, without being subjected to dangers and diseases when they run free.

Second, talk to your local animal control agency. Some cities, Aurora for example, have leash laws that apply to cats. An animal control officer may be able to talk to the cat's owner, or provide you with a humane trap for the animal. If you decide to trap the cat, you must check the trap every several hours so that the cat is not harmed by being in the trap too long without food or water, or exposed to inclement weather.

Another option is to use some type of safe, environmental "booby-trap" which results in the cat having a bad experience whenever she comes into the flowerbed. Motion detectors that emit a loud noise and/or turn on flashing lights are one possibility. Another is a modified, harmless mousetrap, which, when disturbed, pops into the air and startles the cat, but because of its design cannot injure the cat. Another device is a motion detector that attaches to a garden hose, and turns on the water when triggered. All of these devices can be obtained through many pet supply mail order catalogs. The limitation with all of these devices, is that it may not be possible to "booby-trap" every single flowerbed the cat may find attractive. Most commercial spray-type repellants are ineffective.

If you are truly dedicated, another option is to spend many hours watching for the cat to approach the flowerbed, and do something to frighten him. This might include using a hand-held device that emits a very loud ultrasonic noise, or rushing out the door waving your arms to scare the cat away. This may take many consistent repetitions before the cat gets the idea. Unfortunately, every time the cat successfully gets into the flowerbed without being startled, it convinces him that it's worth it to come back again.

A last option might be to provide the cat a litterbox near the flowerbed, in addition to using the "booby-traps" suggested above. While you may be displeased about having to clean out the litterbox, it may be less trouble than cleaning out your garden.