

Good Neighbors

For caretakers, staying on good terms with your neighbors is key.



Staying on good terms with your neighbors may be a concern when you're working hard to care for a community cat or two ... or 10. If cats are causing problems in your neighbors' yards, gardens, or at their bird feeders, this may create tension between you and your neighbors.

We find that it is helpful to respect their opinions and offer to work with them to keep the cats out. Fortunately, there are a number of safe and effective solutions to these problems.

First and most important, talk to your neighbor.

- Find out if the cat is a pet or a stray, and if it has been neutered.
- If it hasn't been neutered, you can take care of that with the help of Alley Cat Advocates.
- Call to find out the next available date to get the cat or cats spayed/neutered.

Here are some common complaints you may hear from neighbors and some easy solutions:

Cats are digging in my garden.

- Your neighbor can scatter fresh orange or lemon peels in the garden area, which cats don't like.
- Other alternatives that deter cats: citrus-scented sprays, coffee grounds, cayenne pepper, vinegar, pipe tobacco, oil of lavender, peppermint oil, lemongrass, citronella and eucalyptus.
- In the garden, place chicken wire, plastic sheets, or plastic carpet runners spike-side up, covered lightly with soil. Cats will be unable to dig in the dirt. Holes can be cut for plants. These things can be removed later, after cats have stopped visiting.

Examples:

- Cat Scat is a plastic mat with small spikes that can be cut into pieces and pressed into the soil to discourage digging.
- Nonchemical cat and wildlife repellents are available at local pet stores. For example, Havahart® Dog & Cat Repellent uses capsaicin, pepper and mustard oil as active ingredients that repel animals and last up to 10 days.
- Coleus Canina and the herb Rue can be planted in and around gardens. Both plants have an odor that repels cats but does not bother humans.

Cats are sleeping under my porch or in my shed.

- Refer to the list above of natural repellents. Apply these fragrances liberally around the edges of the porch or shed.
- Place physical barriers or seal the location the cats are entering with chicken wire or lattice. Be sure to check for kittens first!
- Provide an alternative shelter such as a plastic bin or small doghouse and place it in a secluded area of the yard away from porches and sheds.

Cats are getting into my trashcans.

- Hungry cats are looking for food. Make sure that trash bags are placed in cans, not sitting outside to be torn open by dogs or raccoons.
- Make sure lids fit tightly on cans.
- Feed cats yourself if no one else is feeding them. See section below about cat food and when to feed. If cats have enough to eat, they will leave trash cans alone.

Cat food is attracting insects and raccoons.

- Always feed cats at the same designated time and place during daylight hours, not at night.
- Remove leftover food after 30 minutes. Keep it for the next day.
- Keep feeding area neat and free of leftover food, crumbs and trash.
- See Alley Cat Advocates' "Tips for Food and Feeding Stations" for more information about cat food and when to feed.

My car has paw prints on it.

- Make sure you move your feeding stations and shelters away from driveways and parking areas.

Cats are fighting, yowling, spraying, roaming and having kittens.

- These are mating behaviors that are typical of all cats that have not been altered.
- These problems will stop once the cats are neutered or spayed. Call Alley Cat Advocates at (502) 634-8777 to get started.
- For urine odors, spray the area with white vinegar or products that have natural enzymes—for example, Nature's Miracle®, Fizzion® Pet Stain and Odor Remover, or Simple Solution®. All are available at local pet supply stores.

Another option to consider – an ultrasonic cat deterrent.

- Alley Cat Advocates will loan you one for 30 days to try out.
- The Contech CatStop™ Ultrasonic Outdoor Cat Deterrent emits a motion-activated burst of ultrasonic sound that only cats can hear.
- Cats are startled by the sound, and within 30 days it teaches them to stay away from the neighbor's yard, garden, plants, lawn furniture or sandbox.
- It's safe and effective. Available for purchase on Amazon.com.
- Contact Alley Cat Advocates for more information on this device and how to get one on loan.