



Cat Scent Enrichment at Charleston Animal Society

Flower Power. Cat-safe plants and flowers delight many cats. Roses are edible, so you can treat cats to a bouquet now and then (remove the thorns, of course!). Sunflowers, zinnias, snapdragons, and gerbera daisies are safe, as well as oat grass or dandelion. Pluck a handful of greens from the garden and offer freely to cats.

Many herbs we use in cooking are safe and fun for cats to sniff, and some are known to be feline favorites. Catnip, part of the mint family, affects many cats with a scent-induced kitty “high.” Silver vine has a similar effect. And valerian can energize cats. Fresh work best, but even the dried form may inspire kitty love.

Other safe herbs cats may enjoy sniffing include dill, oregano, parsley, and rosemary. Sprinkle herbs on a carpet or towel for your cat to enjoy. Try filling a plastic bag with catnip, drop in cat’s favorite toy mice for a few days, and then offer the refreshed toys.

Maria Panella Cat Enrichment Garden Includes these Plants:

Lemongrass - Lemongrass has a catnip-like effect on most cats. Whether potted indoors or planted in an outdoor garden, a nibble-friendly patch of lemongrass is a safe cat treat. Lemongrass essential oil, however, can be toxic to felines, so store it safely and securely.

Roman Chamomile - Chamomile is very soothing. This flower calms your stomach, your skin and even your nerves. It can do the same for your kitty. Give it carefully, though, because cats need much, much smaller doses than do humans and even dogs.

Lemon Balm - *Melissa officinalis* is not only a cat favorite, but this herb also makes a wonderful tea and emits a lemon-like fragrance.

Catnip – The ubiquitous catnip or *Nepeta cataria* is best known for being safe for cats. However, it’s best not to give it to cats who have a history of seizures. Also, young kittens and some adult cats do not respond to catnip, so it may be hit or miss with your particular cat.

Rosemary - Cats can safely eat rosemary. In fact, rosemary might even confer a few dietary benefits to your cat. Just be sure that you let your cat eat rosemary in very small portions and as more of a treat than part of a daily routine.

Cat Thyme - This evergreen perennial, *Teucrium marum*, is pretty stinky to us, but cats love it. Your cats will enjoy frolicking around this bush. Grows to about one foot in diameter with pink flowers.

Valerian - *Valeriana officinalis* is an herb that acts much the same as catnip to cats. It grows three to four feet in height.

Complete List of Scent Enrichment Plants Commonly Used for Cats and Dogs:

(Plants and herbs that are sought-out by dogs and cats and the pharmacological / psychological purpose of each. List compiled and researched by Jane Wallwork-Gush a Medical Herbalist and Caroline Ingraham a Zoopharmacognosy Expert.)

1. Green Clay (good for its anti-parasitic and anti-bacterial properties)
2. Birch (known to help with muscular and inflammatory pain)
3. Catnip (good for its relaxing properties and stimulates playfulness in dogs)
4. Chamomile (often selected by anxious dogs and those with skin and stomach upsets)
5. Chickweed (known to help with stomach and skin problems)
6. Clary Sage (often selected by highly-strung animals especially those with hormonal imbalance)
7. Hops (good for calming the mind and often selected by hyperactive and stressed dogs)
8. Lavender (known to encourage scar tissue regeneration)
9. Marigolds (often selected by animals experiencing grief or emotional distress)
10. Marshmallow (known to help animals with delicate stomachs)
11. Meadowsweet (often selected by animals with digestive problems, arthritis and rheumatic conditions)
12. Peppermint (good for its cooling properties and often selected by animals with skin irritations and can also be offered as an aid for training)
13. Plantain (known to help with gastric irritation and inflammation)
14. St John's Wort (a good sedative, pain relief and often selected by animals experiencing depression)
15. Thyme (selected by animals with bacterial infections, skin irritations and diarrhea)
16. Valerian (often selected by anxious dogs for its calming effect)
17. Violets (selected by nervous animals and those who have recently changed home, or may be anticipating physical pain)
18. Wheat Grass (animals that are nervous, anxious and exhibit hyper behaviors often select wheatgrass)
19. Willow (animals in pain often select willow bark)
20. Yarrow (selected by sensitive dogs and is offered to animals with inflammation, urinary problems and internal and external wounds)