

Safe Plants That Are Especially Enticing to Cats

Obviously, it is very important to know which plants are safe for cats and which ones are not. Fortunately, there is a long list of safe grasses and herbs that can provide your cat lots of enjoyment. Among them are:

A few types of grass are safe for — and delicious to — cats. Photography by Nikolay Bassov / Shutterstock.

- 1. Catnip:** The ubiquitous catnip or *Nepeta cataria* is well-known for being safe and enjoyable 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.
- 2. Catmint:** A close relative to catnip, *Nepeta x faassenii* has wonderful lavender or white flowers that will delight both humans and cats. It grows as a bush about a foot high and two to three feet wide.
- 3. 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.
- 4. Wheat grass:** These are sprouts from wheat, chock full of nutrition for cats. Many cats enjoy grazing on it.
- 5. Oat grass:** Like wheat grass, this grass is nutritious and very appealing to cats. It is made from the sprouts of oats, a feline favorite.
- 6. Valerian:** *Valeriana officinalis* is an herb that has an affect similar to catnip. It grows three to four feet in height.
- 7. Rye grass:** Like oat grass and wheat grass, this grass type tends to win over most cats. It made from the sprouts of rye.
- 8. Creeping Rosemary:** This is a popular and hardy rosemary that can withstand a cat pretty well. At maturity, it reaches up to three feet in height.
- 9. Lemon balm:** *Melissa officinalis* is not only a cat favorite, but this herb also makes a wonderful tea and emits a lemon-like fragrance.

Be aware that many of these plants — especially catnip and catmint — grow fast and can take over your garden in no time. Not all cats like all plants, so you may have to experiment. Also, an outdoor garden of cat-pleasing plants can attract the local strays, so be aware of that possibility! You can also plant these in pots...and partially bury the pot so they WON'T take over your garden.

Experts advise cat owners to select garden plants — and dirt — carefully. Many garden centers carry **cocoa bean mulch, which is toxic to dogs and cats if ingested**. Our advice: **Skip the mulch and use plain dirt to be on the safe side.**