

# Lilies, other plants can be toxic to cats

If you own a cat, you know they love to chew on plants. And as spring and Easter roll in, bouquets containing lilies are especially common.



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FOR THE REGISTER

Unfortunately, lilies are probably the most dangerous flower that cats can accidentally ingest. UC Davis veterinarians note that while all plants of the *Lilium* genus should be considered extremely hazardous to cats, calla lilies and peace lilies, which don't belong to the *Lilium* genus, are harmless

to cats.

Lilies contain a chemical that damages the kidneys. All parts of the lily plant are potentially toxic, so if you suspect that your kitty has chewed one, get it in for immediate veterinary treatment.

If therapy is started within 18 hours of ingestion, the prognosis for recovery is good. The sooner treatment is started the better. Vomiting can be induced if you know your cat ingested a lily within an hour. This helps prevent absorption of the toxin.

Fortunately, most houseplants are safe, but it is good to know resources listing toxic plants. One of the best is through the American Society for the Preven-



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tion of Cruelty to Animals, at [aspca.org/Pet-care/poison-control/plant-list-cats](http://aspca.org/Pet-care/poison-control/plant-list-cats). Even if a plant isn't toxic, many plants are irritants and will trigger vomiting in cats.

If your cat goes outside, you likely have seen it eat grass, then vomit. Why would a cat intentionally eat something that they know is going to make her

vomit? There are several theories as to why cats eat plants, but most veterinarians think plant-eating provides fiber to cats. Wild cats are meat eaters; eating plants gives them fiber to help with digestion and helps hair pass through their GI tracts - it's a natural hairball remedy. Many owners grow "cat grass" for their indoor cats to fulfill

**Most lilies are very toxic to cats, though some that aren't from the *Lilium* genus - like these calla lilies - are safe.**

their cat's desire to eat plants.

You can do a few things to prevent plant chewing in your home. Some pet-deterrent products can be put in soil to repel cats. Use a water spray bottle to startle your cat when she approaches a plant you don't want her to chew. Pet-motion detectors that sound a horn and blow air can be put around plants. Ground ginger or cayenne pepper rubbed on leaves can create an adverse taste that will keep some cats from chewing. Some people just keep plants in rooms that are off-limits to their cats.

I always lose the battle in my home to keep my cats away from plants and flowers. My cats even like chew-

ing silk plants. I use Yuck repellent spray on the silk plant leaves and I don't keep live plants around. If I have flowers that are safe for cats, I put them in an area my cats cannot reach. Since both of my cats are seniors, they are unable to jump as high as they used to.

Cats can live safely with plants, but it is a good idea to check for possible toxicities before you choose plants or flowers for your home. And it's best to keep lilies out of your home altogether.

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