

Is It OK to Let My Cat in the Garden?

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, offers tips for keeping your kitty safe.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: Is it safe for my cat to go into my garden?

A: At this time of year, we are getting out our shovels and trowels to prepare for spring planting so your question is well-timed. I had one client who allowed her cat Merlin to go in her private outdoor garden through an open window. Luckily the garden was completely enclosed, otherwise leaving a window open in the city is a total no-no.

Still, it bothered me and I asked if she would keep Merlin inside while she was away. I was worried that when I did my housecalls, he would be outside and I would never see him. Unfortunately, she said that since Merlin was used to being outside, she didn't want to keep him in, adding that "he would be fine." Famous last words.

On my second visit I discovered to my horror that Merlin was quite the hunter. I walked in to find pigeon feathers everywhere and what was left of the poor dead bird on the floor. It was an awful sight. I cleaned it up, grimacing all the way. I guess Merlin was bringing me a gift — but it was one I could have lived without!

If your cat goes in your garden, be mindful of poisonous plants. According to the ASPCA, common plants such as philodendron, lilies and tulips can be dangerous if eaten — and that could mean only a small leaf. You might try spraying your plants with a pet-safe repellent or surrounding them with a chicken wire fence, which is easy to install.

You could also consider giving your kitty her own patch of grass and plant some catnip there to distract her from your garden. Also check to see if the fertilizer and herbicide you use is safe for cats. I will say though, the safest way to ensure your cat will not get into trouble outside is to keep her inside.