

My Cat Is Eating the Indoor Plants

CatChannel behavior expert Marilyn Krieger, CCBC, explains the dangers of cats ingesting plants.

By Marilyn Krieger

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Q: We just adopted a new cat that we believe is a Siberian. She has a problem with eating our indoor plants. I am worried she will get sick from eating them. What should I do?

A: The majority of indoor plants are toxic to cats. Some common houseplants will kill cats; others will make them sick to varying degrees. Always do your homework and research the plants you have before bringing in a new cat. It's just as important to do your homework before bringing in a beautiful new plant into the house. The same is true when bringing home cut flowers. Many beautiful flowers are extremely hazardous, such as lilies and irises. There are many searchable databases available on the Internet that will identify hazardous and safe plants. One good resource is on the Cat Fanciers' Association website.

If you do have toxic plants, I recommend you move the plants outside, or gift them to people who do not have animals. You can also brighten your work environment and your co-workers' days by taking them to the office. There are sprays and substances that can be put on plants to help deter cats. They are not always successful and they have to be reapplied on a consistent basis. Make it safe and simple. Don't take chances with your cat; don't keep any hazardous plants in the house.

The good news is that you don't have to be plant-free. There are many beautiful, safe plants available. Another option to consider is fake plants. There are artificial plants available that are so lifelike it's hard to tell them apart from their live counterparts. Another benefit that comes with artificial plants is that they don't have to be watered or their spent flowers and leaves removed.

Now that the holidays are sneaking up on us, we need to be concerned about the decorative plants that we bring into our households. Most are toxic, some deadly to our cats. Poinsettias, mistletoe, holly and Christmas trees are among the plants that are hazardous to our companion animals. If you must have real holiday plants and trees in the house, consider either keeping the cats out of the areas with the plants, or the plants out of reach and inaccessible. Don't forget that real plants lose leaves and berries and if ingested can kill or make cats very sick.