

CatChannel Exclusive: Catnip Craze

Find out how to score your cat a fix of catnip.

by Laura Lee Bloor

Posted: August 15, 2006, 5 a.m. EST

Although not all cats go crazy for catnip — about one-third of cats do not respond to catnip — the ones who do seem to have a special love affair with the plant. Watching cats strung out on catnip is almost as enjoyable for you as it is for them, so to keep the good times rolling, you want to make sure you have plenty on hand at all times. Keep different varieties of catnip around to ensure a fresh new thrill each time your cat smells the herb.

Grow your own catnip.

Catnip is easy to grow. Plant the seeds in spring about one-fourth inch or less deep in the soil, 18 to 24 inches apart. Catnip plants love sunlight and do well in just about any regular soil. By mid-summer, the catnip plants will be in full-bloom and ready for harvesting.

Harvest catnip leaves (the part your cat likes best) when they are dry and fully grown. Allow them to dry out in the sun and do not expose them to cool night air. Keep the dried leaves in dry places so that they keep as much of their fragrance as possible. The stronger the smell, the more fun for your cat.

If you lack a green thumb, plenty of grow-your-own-catnip kits are available to help you.

In fact, the potency of catnip varies. You may find that your cat reacts differently to your home-grown catnip vs. store-bought catnip.

Spray your catnip.

Catnip oil sprays derived from the plant provide another way for cats to enjoy their favorite herb. Spray it on a plain toy or favorite scratching post to renew your cat's interest in them. You can spray a little on you too if you're outside during the summer — catnip oil can be a natural mosquito repellent.

Try catnip buds.

Treat your cat to a more intense catnip thrill with catnip buds. Catnip buds are the small white and/or purple flower blossoms on the catnip plant that are even more potent than the leaves.

Visit your local pet store or browse online to see what catnip-infused toys they offer. Keep any or all of these catnip varieties nearby and you and your cat will have plenty of entertainment!

Laura Lee Bloor is CAT FANCY's assistant web editor for CatChannel.com.