

Eric's tips for tenants

Cats

Several readers have written to me asking if I have any tips for keeping cats out of gardens. Here are a few ideas for gardeners to try.

Damage caused

Much-loved pets can be the bane of nearby gardeners, whose plots they use as toilet areas. Holes are scraped in flower and vegetable beds and sometimes excrement is deposited on lawns or paths. Tomcats also scent mark their territories by spraying urine on plants which can scorch foliage. Damage to the bark of trees and shrubs, caused by cats sharpening their claws, is another form of territorial marking. Cats also have a habit of sunbathing in inconvenient places, crushing plants in the process. Problems are most severe in high-density housing areas, where cats are numerous and gardens small.

Deterrents

Cats roam freely through their territories and are too agile to be excluded by fencing or netting. However:

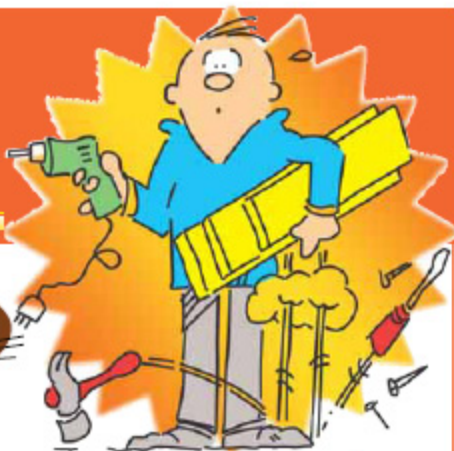
- Netting may be effective in keeping cats away from small areas within the garden.
- Flower borders densely planted with perennials are less appealing as toilet areas - no bare soil to scratch.
- Keep seed rows well watered as cats dislike wet soil, preferring loose, dry earth and mulch.
- Use one or more of the cat deterrents on the market. They fall into two groups: repellents that offend the cat's sense of smell or taste, and electronic scaring devices. Neither type causes harm to animals.
- Plants that have a fragrant foliage. Cats hate pungent smells on themselves so spreading these plants around your borders would help to deter cats in that part of the garden.
- Fill clear plastic bottles with water and place them around the area you want kept clear, apparently cats don't like the reflection.
- Citrus, like lemon juice or lemon rind cats also hate this too.
- Placing cat statues amongst the shrubs can also deter some timid cats.
- You can even buy lion dung, that is a successful cat deterrent.
- As for protecting seedlings or newly planted plants, then sticking twigs in the newly dug soil can keep cats off.

Repellents

These include products containing pepper powder, bone oil, naphthalene, aluminium ammonium sulphate, essential oils and methyl nonyl ketone plus citronella oil. Such repellents give only short-term protection and need frequent re-application. Remove any cat excrement before use. A cat repellent plant, sold under the names of 'Scardy Cat' or *Coluca carina*, is available. The foliage produces an unpleasant smell when touched. This plant can be grown out of doors in the summer but needs frost protection in the winter.

Electronic devices

These are mainly sold by mail order so look for advertisements in newspapers and other gardening magazines. Most produce ultrasonic sound (barely audible to human ears) when triggered by a motion sensor. Some cats flee when they come within range, while others, perhaps the more dominant local cats, hold their ground and carry on regardless. The best results are in open gardens where the ultrasound is not baffled by shrubs or fences. Place the speaker at one end of the garden as sound travels away from the device in the direction it is facing.



Essential Gas Servicing Work



Essential gas servicing works can avoid the risk of faulty appliances, which can reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning which could potentially save lives.



You will be informed of times that gas service engineers will be in your area. If you are not available during this time you will be left an appointment request card to arrange another, more convenient appointment.



The problem Bemeslai Homes are facing is that sometimes this option is not taken up.



Stephen Davis Director of Stock Maintenance at Bemeslai Homes said, "We spend a great deal of time and effort each year servicing gas and solid fuel appliances. We would ask tenants to help us when we leave cards or send appointment request letters".



Mr Davis added, "We are continuing to try and improve this service and are looking at a number of new initiatives to help tenants like evening and Saturday service appointments".



If you haven't had your gas appliances serviced in the last twelve months you should call Inspace on (01226) 361366 if you live in any of the following areas: Deane, Wombwell, Cudworth and Bamsley West and Building Works on (01226) 773731 if you live in: Bamsley North, Bamsley South, Darfield, Royston, Burton Grange, Worsborough, Lundwood or Cundy Cross.

