Cats like to explore their surroundings, and fences and walls cannot prevent this. For them, roaming freely through the garden is the most species-appropriate behaviour imaginable. Essentially, what they need is to monitor their turf regularly, to mount expeditions and above all to act out their natural urges and instincts.

If you want to prevent your cat from going beyond the boundaries of your own garden (e.g. because of a particularly dangerous road), a special cat fence can help. This might be made of a material your cat will not be able to scale (e.g. plastic or Plexiglas) or it might have an extension at the top that skews back inwards (also made of plastic or similar), making it harder for a cat to climb over. In any event, a cat fence definitely has to be very high. Trees, or other plants cats can climb up, should never be planted around the borders of your garden. If you already have a tree there, the solution is to fix a fairly wide plastic shield around the trunk to stop the cat climbing up it. Moreover, unlike dogs, cats cannot be trained not to do their business in your vegetable bed or flower bed; to them, the loose earth pretty much constitutes an invitation. Here, it helps to mulch the soil with natural materials with long fibres, such as dry bark mulch or chopped twigs.

Vegetable beds can be protected by bordering them with plants which have a scent disagreeable to cats – Balkan cranesbill, for example, or common rue or wormwood. Not all animals will react to the same plants, so it is best to find out first by trial and error what will deter your cat.

**Further tips for cat-proofing your garden**

- Sandpits should always be kept covered when your children are not using them.

- To stop your cat getting into the habit of visiting a neighbouring garden to do its business, a sandy area or small pile of sand should be provided on your own property and the dried faeces removed every now and then with a rake.

- Cats sharpen their claws, which may cause fruit trees or other young or delicate trees to shrink if their bark is badly damaged. This can be prevented by wrapping the relevant tree trunk in a scratching mat as tall as the cat itself. You can also protect your trees from harm by placing a few home-made scratching trees in the garden.
• Please consider having your cat neutered as well. Domestic cats that have not been neutered are the main cause of the excessive proliferation of strays. Sadly, cats are still being shot, poisoned, beaten to death, drowned or killed by other methods in order to curb the number of strays. Only by neutering your own cat and supporting projects for neutering stray animals can you help prevent this suffering!

**Rain barrels**

Rain barrels must be covered with a secure, properly fitting lid. This is essential to prevent cats drowning in them.

**Above:** Responsible ownership 101: Cats that roam should always be neutered.

**Centre:** Cats love to explore their surroundings.

**Below:** Cats dislike certain scents, such as citrus; these scents can be carefully dispensed in order to keep cats from going where you’d rather they didn’t.