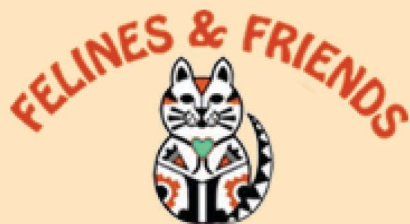


# Keep your Cat Safe Consider a Catio



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Many Cities such as Santa Fe have adopted ordinances against free roaming pets. While it is often easier to keep a dog in a secure yard, cats present a challenge due to their agility. They are able scale walls and fences with ease and some even seem to “shape shift” through spaces we would think are impossible.

Buying a prefab catio online can be very expensive. However, we are seeing more enterprising local handymen developing affordable designs. Sometimes, creating a catio is as simple as screening in a portal and adding a few shelves, cat furniture and even a branch. More elaborate designs can include multiple levels for cats to climb and explore as well as comfortable perches to lounge. Catos must have a top to prevent cats climbing out and other critters climbing in. The location of a catio is important to avoid extreme temperatures and they should be at least partially covered with shade cloth. A secure access point from the outside is essential for cleaning or an emergency. Clean water should always be available, but food should be avoided so as not to attract unwanted “guests” such as mice [who can attract snakes].

To avoid penetrating stucco walls, catios can be framed panels that bolt together and are secured on the ground so that it doesn't move. If there is a gap where the catio meets a wall, a trim board can be attached to the catio to fill in the gap.

Santa Fe Cats boarding hotel for cats on Tano Rd offers individual catios attached to each of the downstairs suites as well as a community catio where feline guests can spend social time throughout the day if they enjoy the companionship of others. Over the years, clients have taken photos and designed their own versions of catios at home after seeing how much their cat enjoyed this safe option for fresh air and sunshine.

Seattle-based cat expert Cynthia Chomos is helping raise awareness of the well-being of cats and their value as companions. In 2014, Chomos started Catio Spaces, a company that designs and builds





custom outdoor enclosures and offers DIY catio plans in a variety of sizes for a window, porch, patio, deck or yard to help protect cats from various outdoor hazards and provide much needed stimulation on a daily basis. Each plan is a PDF download that includes a material and tool list, step-by-step instructions and diagrams for a successful project. Ten percent of DIY plan sales is donated to animal welfare organizations. Chomos says “Lifelong cat parents and first-time pet owners can help enhance the health and happiness of our four-legged family members” and lists 10 benefits of catios for cat owners:

1. Protection from vehicles, predators, poisons, diseases or getting lost or stuck in a tree.
2. Reduce vet bills from cat fights or injuries.
3. Protect birds and wildlife.
4. Help reduce the roaming cat populations in local communities.
5. Provide a healthy outdoor lifestyle with fresh air, exercise, bird watching and sunbathing.
6. Help reduce indoor multi-cat issues by adding more territory.
7. Enjoy feline and human interaction surrounded by nature and fresh air.
8. Help reduce indoor odors with an additional outdoor litter box.
9. Good neighbor relations (keep your cat out of their gardens and yards).
10. Peace of mind knowing your cat is in a safe and protected place.

**Catios don't have to be only for your cat; you can enjoy the space as well if you include patio furniture. Enjoying time with your cat in fresh air in a safe environment can be rewarding and relaxing.**

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