



GeoCatch

www.geocatch.asn.au

# CATIO DESIGN GUIDE

"While there are many benefits to keeping your cat at home, it also means that you have complete responsibility for and control over their environment. So it's essential that the spaces you provide includes... opportunities to engage in normal behaviours such as stalking, pouncing, climbing, scratching and exploring"

www.rspca.org.au



## What is a catio?

A **catio** is a secure outdoor cat enclosure, or "cat patio" for your cat.

They are a great way of allowing your cat to enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of the outdoors, while keeping them safe and protecting our native wildlife. Cats are healthy and *puurfectly* happy in a catio, provided it is designed to deliver mental and physical enrichment.

## Why have a catio?

There are many benefits of catios, here are just ten of the main ones:

1. **Protect your cat outdoors** from vehicles, poisons, diseases accidents, or getting lost.
2. **Reduce vet bills** from cat fights, ingesting toxins or injuries.
3. **Protect birds and wildlife:** billions of birds are killed each year by roaming cats.
4. **Reduce roaming populations** and issues they cause.
5. **Provide a healthy outdoor lifestyle** with exercise, fresh air, bird watching, sunbathing, jumping, climbing and running.
6. **Reduce multi-cat issues** with increased territory and multiple options for some 'alone' time.
7. **Enrich cat and human companionship** by relaxing in shared healthy outdoor spaces.
8. **Reduce indoor odours** by giving outdoor toilet options.
9. **Good neighbour relations** are easy when your cat stays on your side of the fence!
10. **Peace of mind** knowing your cat is safe in a protected and secure environment.



## Types of catio

There are always opportunities to expand your cat's territory in a responsible way. Even if you are not able to build a catio structure, there is plenty you can do indoors to enrich your feline's environment.

### Covered catio

These can be either attached to an existing structure (house, garage, fence or shed) or free-standing. The total containment gives you full peace of mind knowing your cat will not get out and wildlife cannot get in.

### Open catio

These do not have overhead containment and rely totally on discouraging your cat from climbing over the property fences or walls, either using commercially bought 'paddles' that spin, or inward angled netting. Wildlife (flying and climbing) can still access the catio, so extra care should be taken with design and plant selection.

### Indoor playground

Cats love high places and being able to observe life outside. Easy access to window(s) and viewing perches is important, so they can engage with the sights, sounds, and smells of the great outdoors.

For all types of catio, there are lots of ways you can help satisfy the inner 'house panther':

- (i) increasing the area your cat can explore - introduce level changes and perches or raised walkways with observation decks and resting platforms.
- (ii) providing lots of choice - in bedding, scratchy surfaces (vertical, horizontal), and places to hide or explore (tunnels, boxes).
- (iii) including things your cat can sniff or nibble (cat grass is a must have item!).





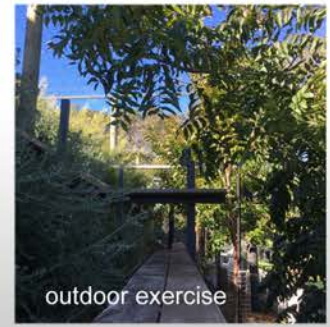
indoor rest (garden view)

# CATIO DESIGN GUIDE

## your pet's own palace

*"An outdoor cat enclosure gives your feline companion the best of both worlds... Properly designed and constructed, a cat enclosure gives your friend access to the outdoors while keeping him/her secure."*

[www.animalwellnessmagazine.com](http://www.animalwellnessmagazine.com)



outdoor exercise

## Creating a catio

There are endless commercial and DIY options for catios to suit all budgets, tastes and locations. To get started creating your own catio, you will need to consider:

- Which part of the garden/house works best (circulation, sun/shade)
- How your cat will access the catio (tunnel, window, door, wall cut)
- The space and budget available
- How you access the catio?
- Will you build it or get someone to install it for you?
- What construction style is the best suited to your situation?
- What materials and finishes for building and features is cat safe?



## Catio design ideas

When it comes to the design of the catio itself and safe space it creates, there are many issues and opportunities to work through.

**Your catio is only limited by your imagination and creativity.** Here are some ideas to get you started:

Ensure that there is enough room to exercise freely, and allow your cat(s) 24 hr access to the catio.

It is important to incorporate mental and physical enrichment elements into your catio, such as platforms at different levels for viewing, jumping, and resting.

Cats love elevated walkways and perches, but make sure kittens and seniors are able to reach all areas safely; use ramps, shallow stepping stones or close stepped shelves.

Include some soft ground to create the true outdoor experience (lawn, groundcover) and mulch on planting beds is the perfect outdoor litter.

Provide planting and/or plants in large pots for shade and hiding. Some common plants are toxic to pets, so check the GeoCatch **Catio Planting Guide** for safe plants to use.

A substantial scratchy pole covered with outdoor carpet or natural fibre/ sisal rug or rope is perfect for climbing exercise, stretching and scratching. Logs/tree trunks are also good for sharpening claws.

Stick to untreated natural materials wherever possible; e.g. non-toxic paint, and ensure there are no sharp edges or places paws can get snagged or caught.

Include seating areas for you!

## Catio construction

Catios range in size, shape and materials from timber + wire window boxes to metal frame + mesh walk-in structures, to expansive netted garden areas.

Key elements are:

1. Access point(s) for cats
2. Access/door(s) for humans (for maintenance + use)
3. Frame (supports and/or wires)
4. Mesh or netting sides
5. Mesh/netting/polycarb roof
6. Shelving/platforms/poles
7. Planting areas/lawn/pots
8. Litter trays/mulch areas



## Catio resources

The catio movement is growing fast: More and more cat owners realise how many benefits catios bring to the lives of their feline companions, to the local wildlife, and to their own peace of mind.

**Websites** that focus on the wellbeing of cats and creation of catios include:  
[www.safecat.org.au](http://www.safecat.org.au)  
[www.catssafeathome.org](http://www.catssafeathome.org)  
[www.catiospaces.com](http://www.catiospaces.com)  
[www.goodcatsa.com/cat-proofing](http://www.goodcatsa.com/cat-proofing)  
 Good cats play at home (booklet)  
[www.rspca.org.au](http://www.rspca.org.au) - Keeping your cat safe and happy at home

**Local resources:**  
[www.geocatch.asn.au](http://www.geocatch.asn.au)  
 pets away, possums play factsheet  
 catio planting guide factsheet  
[www.kwokka.com.au](http://www.kwokka.com.au) - design + DIY build + landscape consultancy  
[www.katzone.com.au](http://www.katzone.com.au)  
 customized build + installation  
 Busselton mens shed - DIY plans  
 Bunnings - materials

This project is delivered by GeoCatch and is supported by South West Catchment Councils, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

