



CATIO SPACES®

Designing Spaces for Safe, Healthy & Happy Cats

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(credit: Catio Spaces)

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Pandemic inspires DIY home improvements projects for feline family members

SEATTLE, Washington (March 15, 2021) -- As the United States and other nations embark on the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, research shows Americans are finding comfort in pets and DIY (do it yourself) projects. As pet parents start to return to work, animal behaviorists worry some pets may suffer from separation anxiety. For those who continue to work at home, creating pet friendly spaces can help ease household stress and provide additional territory to support all family members.

Cat lifestyle expert Cynthia Chomos, founder-designer at Seattle-based [Catio Spaces](#), believes a DIY catio offers a win-win solution. "These outdoor enclosures offer fresh air, and combine stimulation, safety, and security for cats in all stages of life," she commented. Her "before and after" [showcase](#) has examples for a variety of locations, including a window, patio, deck, garden or yard that serve multi-pet households and recently adopted cats.

More than two-thirds of U.S. households have at least one pet, and, not surprisingly, nearly every pet owner (95%) considers their pets to be part of their family, according to a survey by Harris Poll.



With the pandemic-inspired surge in pet adoptions and fostering, pet-friendly spaces are increasingly important to animal-loving home buyers.

An [online survey](#) by Realtor.com found that 87% of house-hunters considered their pets' needs when buying a home, and 75% of buyers said they would pass on their dream house if it was not right for their pets. (American households own around 42.7 million pet cats, according to data from the American Pet Products Association. Over 85 million families own at least one pet.)

The pandemic proved to stimulate interest in DIY projects. Large numbers of people working from home undertook remodeling themselves, or hired a contractor to improve living spaces, including areas for their four-legged housemates. Houzz, an online home remodeling platform, reported a 58% annual increase in project leads for home professionals in June. Another report shows spending on home improvements and repairs grew by more than 3% during 2020, with more growth (to 4.1%) expected during the first quarter of 2021.



For those who fancy felines, catios can be fun and rewarding to build, whether the choice is a compact window box or a spacious oasis structure in a garden or yard. The award-winning, downloadable [DIY plans](#) from Catio Spaces take the guesswork out of building a cat enclosure with step-by-step instructions, diagrams, a materials list, and a tool list. Catios can be painted and accessorized with seating and other creature comforts for an enriching outdoor experience.

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"The DIY catio plans were a perfect solution for us. The directions were great, every detail was considered, and the plans were easy to follow," proclaimed one woman upon completing the "Sanctuary Plan," a 3-sided lean-to with space for human seating. "I feel safe giving my cats permanent access, even at night," she added.

"Catiots help solve the indoor-outdoor dilemma while also addressing a cat's physical, mental and environmental needs," stated Chomos, who also designs and builds custom catios, mostly in the Greater Seattle area. "I'm passionate about design, nature and cats," said Chomos, a general contractor who applies her expertise as a Feng Shui consultant when designing flexible outdoor havens for felines and their parents.

Chomos notes catios have earned praise from the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP). In a [position statement](#) reflecting a shift from a preference for indoor-only living environments, AAFP concluded "that indoor/outdoor living for cats in an environment that is safe is the best option for pet cats."

Left to roam free, cats are vulnerable to numerous hazards such as being hit by a car, pursued by predators, and exposure to toxins. Outdoor cats (particularly ferals) are known to kill billions of birds and other small mammals every year, underscoring the need for cat enclosures, harnesses, leashes, or similar methods to prevent roaming.

There are also downsides to indoor-only cats. Veterinarians list boredom, obesity, lack of exercise, behavior problems, inability to express normal cat behaviors, and stress-related disease as some of the drawbacks.

In a discussion on the benefits of "cat patios," Dr. Karen Becker, an integrative wellness veterinarian and animal advocate, offered several suggestions for items to consider when planning and accessorizing a catio. Her tips included vertical spaces for climbing and exploring; shaded areas; scratching poles; walkways, shelves, and cat trees; and natural materials like grass and cat-friendly herbs. The popular author and educator says, "Catiots are only limited by your imagination (and budget)!"

"While life during a quarantine has been challenging, catio cats are enjoying many [benefits of catios](#)," reported Chomos, adding, "They will continue to have a safe, enriching environment long after their owners resume working outside the home."

Chomos founded Catio Spaces in 2014 to address the need for safe and visually appealing outdoor enclosures to enhance a cat's life, and to help protect birds and wildlife. She is a member of the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties and a founding sponsor of Catio Tour Seattle.

Catio Spaces also offers an [Affiliate Program](#) for animal welfare organizations that help cats, birds or wildlife. As part of that program, Catio Spaces will donate 10% from sales of DIY plans to enrolled organizations, and also provides free tools and tips for cat parents.

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DIY CATIO PLANS

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