Potter League
Enriching Lives

DO IT YOURSELF CAT FENCE

For Domestic Cats and Homed Feral Cats (This cat fence is not appropriate for feral cat colonies!) Information provided by Alley Cat Alliance

This cat fence is made of netting material that can be attached to an existing fence or can even be installed without a fence. The net "gives," which is why cats will not climb it. First, determine which section(s) of instructions you need for your yard:

- If you have an existing chain link or any fence under five feet high, see Section I for supplies and instructions necessary for installing the "netting" fence to your existing fence.

- If you have no existing fence, see Section II for instructions on installing a chicken wire fence and Section I for installing netting.

- If you have an existing wooden privacy fence (five feet or higher), use only Section III.

Materials Needed:

- Garden net

- Polypropylene Net: 1 1⁄2 inch x 1 1⁄2 inch (this size hole is least visible), 208 inches wide (cut into strips of 69 inches). Example: fence perimeter = 150 feet, then order 50 feet of net (208 inches/12 inches x 50 feet x .032 = $27.31).

- Pliers

- Garden Poles: available in garden centers and hardware stores with garden supply departments. The poles are green vinyl wrapped around aluminum. Seven feet is the best height.

- Fishing line: black fishing line is the least visible. Twice the fence perimeter is required. Example: fence = 150 feet, line needed = 300 feet.

- Wire: 16 gauge. Fence requires 1 1⁄2 feet per garden pole.

Section I

Materials and tools for chain link or similar fence under five feet high

Materials:

- Garden Poles (7 feet)
- Half inch staples for staple gun
- Fishing line and twist ties
- Garden net
- Wire

Tools:

- Clippers or pruning shears
- Loppers or pruning shears
- Scissors
- Staple gun
- Pliers

Instructions for installing "net" fence on existing chain link fence or similar fence under five feet high

- Clear the fence of plant growth. Prune any shrubs to clear a space for the net. Examine the chain link for any holes or gaps along the bottom. Repair with chicken wire, wood boards or dirt, as necessary. Tree guards can be installed on trees (see Section IV).

- Cut the netting. Roll out and cut so each strip is 69 inches wide. Caution: twigs can easily catch and tangle in the net. Be careful not to accidentally tear holes in it.

- Prepare the garden poles. Secure the pole, then staple with the gun pressed firmly against the side of the pole point. If the staple does not penetrate evenly and securely, remove with pliers and try again. Put two staples in the pointed end of the pole before the pole is attached to the fence (staples are used to attach the net to the poles by threading them with fishing lines).

- Affix the pole to the chain link fence with the stapled end up. The pole does not need to penetrate the ground. Affix the garden pole to the inside of the chain link pole with wire. Use pliers to twist the wire in three places on each set of poles. The poles should be no more than 10-12 feet apart.

- Use twist ties to attach the net to the staple on top of the garden pole. Wherever pieces of netting are joined be sure to leave an overlap of netting. Pull the net along the fence to the next pole and attach it in the same manner. The net should be taut, but not pulled tight, and should fall to the inside of the fence.

- Weave the fishing line through the top of the entire net from staple to staple, moving horizontally for the length of the fence. The fishing line should be woven through both (together) the chain link and the net, just below the top of the chain link fence to prevent cats from slipping underneath. Only weave the netting vertically to the end poles where the netting strips join together.

Section II

Materials and tools for a chicken wire fence

Materials:

- Chicken wire stakes (4 feet)
- Chicken wire (3 feet high, 1 inch mesh)

Tools:

- Screwdriver
- Small sledge hammer

Instructions for installing chicken wire fence

- Stakes should be placed every five feet and pounded into the ground so that the metal flange at the bottom of the stake is completely underground.
- Use a flat head screwdriver to slightly pry open the metal hooks on the stake.
- Attach the chicken wire to the stakes by hooking the wire into hooks on the stakes. Make the bottom of the chicken wire flush with the ground so the cats cannot go underneath it.
- Bend the hooks back against the stake to permanently bind the chicken wire to the stakes. Do this by holding a sledge hammer behind the hook on the stake, then use a hammer to pound the hook back to the stake.
- Stake the chicken wire to the ground so the cats cannot go underneath it (i.e. bricks, metal stakes).
- Install the netting as described in Section I with the following adaptations: attach the garden poles to every other stake. The netting should be draped inside and woven to the chicken wire – close to the top of the wire.

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Section III

Materials and tools for attaching a net to a five foot or taller wooden privacy fence

Materials:

- Flag pole brackets
- Staples
- Twist ties
- Fishing line
- Garden net (see Section I)
- Wooden dowels (4 feet) that fit into pole brackets

Tools:

- Screwdriver
- Scissors
- Pliers
- Staple gun
- Clippers or pruning shears
- Loppers or pruning saw

Instructions for attaching a net to a five foot or taller wooden privacy fence

- Clear the fence of plant growth. Prune any shrubs to clear a space for the net. Examine the fence for any holes or gaps along the bottom. Repair with chicken repair with chicken wire, wood boards or dirt, as necessary. Tree guards can be installed on trees (see Section IV).

- Cut the netting. Roll out and cut so each strip is 69 inches wide. Caution: twigs can be easily caught and tangled in the net. Be careful not to accidentally tear holes in the net.

- Attach flagpole brackets to the fence about four feet off the ground and about 10 feet apart.

- Put staples securely in the tops of the wooden dowels. Leave enough room to thread the fishing line.

- Insert the dowels into the brackets. Secure them firmly with a wedge or wire, if necessary.

- Attach the netting at the top and base of the poles with twist ties. Vertically weave the fishing line around the net and poles. Staple the net to the fence horizontally, along the bottom seam. Weave the fishing line through the top of the net horizontally

Section IV

Miscellaneous notes

- **Birds:** It usually takes a few weeks for birds to get used to the fence. If they fly into the fence, they usually bounce off the net and fly over it. Do not feed birds inside the fence.

- **Other cats getting into your fence:** This can happen if a tree or shed outside of the fence can be used as an access point. Simply let them out by opening your gate.

- **Homed or tamed feral cats:** These wary animals may be afraid of the fence and should be introduced to it gradually, so they're not frightened into running through it. They can break through it, but it's best if they don't discover that breaking through is an option.

- **Adjustment period:** Cats that are accustomed to being outside usually go through an adjustment period, which can last a couple of weeks. At first they may be angry with you and with each other. They will search for, and will probably find, ways to escape. Watch them closely and patch the escape routes. After a while they will no longer search for escape routes. Supervise indoor cats upon initial exposure to the fence, as they become familiar with their yard. This helps them to "know" their home and return if they do escape.

- **Trees:** To prevent cats from escaping on large trees, aluminum flashing can be wrapped around and nailed to the trunk of the tree. Put the flashing up high and away from branches, so cats cannot jump above it.

- **Escape routes:** You may have escape routes if your yard has sheds, trees along the fence or dense shrubbery. In these cases, your fence may require customization. Chicken wire (see Section II) may be used to block the escape routes.

- **Escape artists:** Some cats learn to rip or push through the fence. A double layer of netting takes care of this problem