

Choose a birthday bouquet made entirely from flowers and foliage known to be nontoxic to the recipient's pets, and check every stem before giving it. For homes with cats or dogs, gerbera daisies, roses and Phalaenopsis orchids are options, but keep the finished arrangement out of reach.

Check the Flowers and Every Extra

Start by asking what animals live in the recipient's home. A plant that is considered nontoxic to cats and dogs is not automatically safe for rabbits, birds or other pets. If you cannot confirm a plant's safety for the animal in the home, leave it out.

Use the plant's full name when checking it. Common names can refer to different plants, so a label such as orchid or daisy may not give enough information. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals maintains searchable lists of plants that are toxic and nontoxic to cats and dogs.

A bouquet is more than its main flowers. Greenery and small filler flowers need checking too. Avoid lilies in a home with cats: even small exposures can cause serious kidney injury. Tulips and daffodils are also toxic to cats and dogs. Baby's breath, a common filler, can cause vomiting and diarrhea in both.

Put the Bouquet Together Safely

1. Ask about pets before choosing the flowers. If the bouquet is a surprise, ask someone who knows the household.
2. Choose individually identified flowers that are nontoxic to those animals. For cats and dogs, a simple arrangement of gerbera daisies or roses is easier to check than a mixed bouquet with unidentified stems.

3. Check all foliage and filler by name. If a stem cannot be identified, ask for it to be removed rather than assuming it is safe.
4. Remove rose thorns and avoid ribbons or decorations that a pet could swallow. Ask for plain water without added flower food.
5. Tell the recipient what is in the bouquet and suggest a spot the pet cannot reach. Keep the vase stable, and clean up fallen petals and leaves.

Nontoxic does not mean a bouquet is edible. Any plant material can upset a pet's stomach, and a vase can spill or break if knocked over. Plain water also needs changing regularly to keep it fresh.

Questions About Pet-Safe Bouquets

Are all lilies dangerous to cats?

True lilies and daylilies are especially dangerous to cats. Because names can be confusing, leave out any flower called a lily unless its identity and safety are confirmed.

Can I give roses to someone with a dog or cat?

Roses are considered nontoxic to cats and dogs. Remove thorns, check the rest of the arrangement and keep it out of reach.

Is flower food safe for pets?

Do not assume it is safe to drink. Use plain water and prevent pets from drinking from the vase.

What if a pet eats part of the bouquet?

Contact a veterinarian promptly, especially if the plant is unknown or may be toxic. Keep the flower name or a sample to help identify it, and do not induce vomiting unless a veterinarian instructs you to.

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