

Most true orchids, including familiar moth orchids, are considered safe to grow in a home with indoor cats. A nibble is unlikely to poison a cat, though eating plant material can upset its stomach, and other items in the pot may pose risks.

Orchid types generally considered safe

Phalaenopsis, commonly known as moth orchids, are not considered toxic to cats. Cattleya and Dendrobium orchids are also generally regarded as non toxic. These are true orchids, and the plants themselves are not considered a poisoning risk if a cat shares the room with them.

Before bringing a new plant home, read the botanical name on its label. Common names can be misleading, and a flower that resembles an orchid may not be a true orchid. If you cannot identify the plant, keep it somewhere your cat cannot reach until you know what it is.

Safe to have around does not mean safe to chew as a meal. A cat that eats a lot of leaves or flowers may vomit or develop diarrhea. You might also find that a curious cat has left the plant with ragged leaves or damaged blooms.

Check the pot and its contents

Take a look at everything surrounding the orchid, not only its flowers. A quiet moment on the windowsill can turn into a play session if your cat notices a loose ribbon or dangling leaf.

- **Fertilizer and pesticide products:** Swallowing these can be harmful. Follow the directions on the label, and keep treated plants away from cats, particularly while a spray is still wet.

- **Potting material:** Orchids are often planted in bark instead of regular soil. Bark is not food, and swallowed pieces could cause choking or a blockage.
- **Extra decorations:** Moss, ribbons, stakes and clips may catch a cat's attention. Small pieces can be dangerous if chewed or swallowed.
- **Pots that can tip:** A cat pulling at a leaf may send a pot tumbling from a shelf. Choose a stable place so the plant is less likely to fall on the cat or break.

Store fertilizer containers and other gardening supplies closed and out of reach. Before returning a sprayed orchid to a spot your cat can access, read the product label for directions about pets.

What to do after a nibble

First move the orchid away, then check what your cat may have eaten. A small bite from a known, untreated moth orchid is unlikely to cause poisoning, but keep an eye out for vomiting, diarrhea or behavior that seems unusual.

Call your veterinarian if your cat develops symptoms, swallows bark or a decoration, or might have eaten a plant treated with a chemical. Keep the plant label and any product packaging nearby so you can share the details. If you are not sure what kind of plant it is, a clear photo may help your veterinarian assess the situation.

Do not try to make your cat vomit unless a veterinarian instructs you to. Choking, difficulty breathing or signs that your cat is seriously unwell call for immediate veterinary help.

Common questions about orchids and cats

Is a windowsill a suitable place for an orchid?

It can be, provided the plant is secure and your cat is unlikely to knock it down. A bright windowsill may suit an orchid, but check the light requirements for that particular plant.

How do I keep my cat from chewing orchid leaves?

Put the orchid in a room your cat cannot enter or in a place the cat truly cannot access. You can also offer suitable toys and playtime elsewhere. A shelf only counts as out of reach if your cat cannot get to it.

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