



Celebrating 22 Years!

ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

EMAIL OR MAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:  
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QUESTION THIS WEEK:

I have a dog, two cats, and about a dozen chickens in my back yard. What sorts of plants can I grow in a garden to give them as treats? - Louise

Linda's Answer:

Hi Louise,

It is a great idea to grow a garden for your pets! And anything you can grow at home will be an added benefit for your chickens, because you will know exactly where it comes from and the extra good stuff will be going into their eggs.

For the chickens, I would recommend you plant a bed of sunflowers and/or safflowers. Other vegetables that chickens love include cucumbers, pumpkins, and tomatoes, but be careful not to feed them the greens/leaves from the tomatoes, as they are poisonous. Any of the heartier greens such as kale, cabbage, Swiss Chard, and collard greens are also great treats that often come with a boost of protein from the inevitable cabbage worms that tend to crawl on them. Chickens can also benefit greatly from some herbs in their diet such as oregano, thyme, and calendula. Raw pumpkin seeds are a natural de-wormer and oregano is used in many medicinal tinctures for bird health as an antibiotic. You might also grow some mint, lemon balm, or lavender to throw into their nesting boxes and keep them smelling fresh.

A cat garden would have to include catnip, of course, if you can manage to grow any without the cats eating it all the second it is planted! Other contenders for the cat garden include licorice root, cat grass (or rye grass), lemon grass, and valerian. Cats aren't big fans of vegetables, despite what some of the fancy cans of cat food say, so you are best feeding them a mostly meat diet besides these occasional plant treats.

A dog garden is a little easier. The following vegetables are safe and healthy to feed your dog: blueberries, broccoli, cauliflower, cantaloupe, carrots, cucumber, green beans, lettuce, peas, pumpkin, spinach, strawberries, squash, and watermelon. Some of these would certainly taste better to your dog fresh picked instead of cooked into their food, but I suggest you test them on your canine friend to see what he likes before you try to grow an entire garden full of it! Good luck!



Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 22 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects.

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