FOOD & PLANTS

Are Orchids Toxic to Cats? The Moth Orchid Is Safe

The moth orchid (Phalaenopsis) is non-toxic to cats, the ASPCA says, and so is a long list of other orchids. The family is huge, though, so check yours by name, and watch what goes on the plant.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed November 1, 2026 • 5 min read • 5 cited sources

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The short answer

The moth orchid is safe. The ASPCA lists Phalaenopsis, also called moth orchid or moon orchid, as non-toxic to cats, dogs and horses.

Other orchids vary, so check yours by name. Orchids are one of the largest plant families, and the ASPCA's list names only some of them. The good news: it names a long list of orchids as non-toxic to cats, and none on its toxic list.

Non-toxic means not poisonous, not cat food. A cat that chews a lot of any plant can vomit, and the fertilizer and sprays that come with an orchid can cause trouble of their own.

Orchids on the ASPCA's safe list

These orchids are on the ASPCA's list of plants non-toxic to cats, under the names it uses:

- Moth or moon orchid (Phalaenopsis)
- Cattleya orchids, including the Christmas orchid (Cattleya trianaei), cocktail orchid (C. forbesii) and Easter orchid (C. mossiae)
- Dancing doll orchid (Oncidium flexuosum) and golden shower orchid (Oncidium sphacelatum)
- Epidendrum orchids: the fiery reed, rainbow and spice orchids
- Florida butterfly orchid (Encyclia tampensis)

- Jewel orchid (Haemaria discolor)
- Lace orchid (Odontoglossum crispum)
- Leopard orchid (Dendrobium gracilicaule)
- Pansy orchid (Miltonia roezlii alba)
- Tailed orchid (Masdevallia)
- Brazilian orchid (Sophronitis)

How to check an orchid that isn't listed

Look at the plant tag for the scientific name, the Latin one such as Phalaenopsis or Dendrobium, and search the ASPCA list for it. Common names are unreliable: the list itself shows "Christmas orchid" used for a Cattleya, and many unrelated plants share names.

A listing covers the plant it names. The ASPCA lists one Dendrobium, the leopard orchid, as non-toxic; that does not cover every Dendrobium, so a different species is simply unlisted.

If you can't find your orchid, or the tag is gone, treat it as unknown: keep it out of reach, and call your vet or a poison line if your cat eats some.

Keeping orchids with a cat

Moth orchids are easy to live with. Most of the risks come from what surrounds them:

- Set the pot where your cat can't knock it over or dig in the bark.
- Read the label on orchid fertilizer and pest sprays before using them where your cat can reach, and keep the bottles closed and put away (see below).
- Check gift arrangements for what came with the orchid: every part of a true lily is an emergency for cats (FDA), so a lily tucked into an arrangement has to go.
- If your cat chews the leaves or flowers, move the plant higher: the orchid will thank you.
- Give your cat other things to do: see **indoor cat enrichment**.

If your cat ate an orchid

If it was a moth orchid, or another orchid on the ASPCA's non-toxic list, it is not poisonous. Your cat may still vomit after eating a leaf or flower: plant eating often ends that way, and a University of California, Davis study of cat owners found that about a quarter to a third of cats often vomit after eating plants.

Call your vet if vomiting carries on, your cat won't eat or seems unwell, or you don't know which orchid it was. If your cat got into fertilizer or a freshly sprayed plant, tell the vet or the poison line what the label says: ASPCA Animal Poison Control, (888) 426-4435, or Pet Poison Helpline, (855) 764-7661. Both answer 24/7; a consultation fee may apply.

This quick sheet is the start of the guide. Still to read: Orchid fertilizer and sprays, Cat-safe plants to grow instead, Quick answers, plus the Toxic & Safe Houseplants for Cats Chart. Read it all free when you join our pet health emails at cattcountycatnippers.org/articles/are-orchids-toxic-to-cats

Sources

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