FOOD & PLANTS

Are Snake Plants Toxic to Cats? Signs and What to Do

Yes. Snake plants (mother-in-law's tongue) are toxic to cats and not cat safe. Their saponins can cause nausea, drooling, vomiting and diarrhea, and dilated pupils and a wobbly walk have been reported in cats.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed October 30, 2026 • 5 min read • 8 cited sources

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The short answer

Yes, snake plants are toxic to cats. The ASPCA lists the snake plant (Sansevieria trifasciata), also called mother-in-law's tongue, golden bird's nest and good luck plant, as toxic to cats and dogs. Snake plant is toxic to cats and can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

So a snake plant is not safe for cats. Merck's veterinary manual covers the whole Sansevieria group, flat-leaved or cylindrical, and finds the toxins in the leaves and flowers; Pet Poison Helpline adds the stems.

How sick a cat gets depends on things like how much it ate and its size (Pet Poison Helpline), so call your vet or a poison line whatever the amount.

Snake plant, Sansevieria or Dracaena?

The plant has two scientific names in use. Pet Poison Helpline lists it as Dracaena trifasciata, while the ASPCA still files it under Sansevieria trifasciata. To find it on the ASPCA list, search for mother-in-law's tongue, the name its entry goes under.

The other dracaenas are different plants, but they are no safer. The ASPCA lists corn plant (Dracaena fragrans) as toxic to cats, also for saponins, with vomiting, loss of appetite, drooling and dilated pupils among its signs.

How saponins harm a cat

A snake plant does not work like **pothos** or **monstera**, whose crystals burn the mouth at the first bite. Its toxins are saponins, and a 2023 review in the journal Toxins describes them as irritating, with the main signs in the stomach and gut.

The review explains that saponins interfere with the fats in cell membranes, changing what passes through them and in time breaking the cell down. Merck lists hemolysis, the breakdown of red blood cells, among the effects, alongside vomiting, drooling and diarrhea.

Some signs are reported in cats in particular. Pet Poison Helpline reports dilated pupils and a wobbly walk in cats, and the Toxins review adds a fast heartbeat.

Signs to watch for

SNAKE PLANT SIGNS, AND WHO REPORTS THEM

Sign	Reported by
Nausea: drooling, lip-licking, turning away from food	ASPCA, Merck, Pet Poison Helpline, Toxins review
Vomiting	ASPCA, Merck, Pet Poison Helpline, Toxins review
Diarrhea	ASPCA, Merck, Toxins review
Not eating, low mood, weakness	Toxins review
A wobbly walk	Pet Poison Helpline (in cats), Toxins review
Dilated pupils	Pet Poison Helpline and Toxins review (in cats)
A fast heartbeat	Toxins review (in cats)
Breakdown of red blood cells	Merck

Any of these in a cat that has been near a snake plant is worth a call.

This quick sheet is the start of the guide. Still to read: If your cat chewed a snake plant, What the vet may do, How other easy-care plants compare and 3 more sections, plus the Toxic & Safe Houseplants for Cats Chart. Read it all free when you join our pet health emails at cattcountycatnippers.org/articles/is-snake-plant-toxic-to-cats

Sources

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