

# An Irresistible Challenge

**While searching for the perfect scratcher, Sandy Robins gets the opportunity to design one.**



BY SANDY ROBINS

Scratching is normal feline behavior. Apart from sharpening their claws, cats also scratch to mark their territory, exercise and reduce stress.

When shopping for scratching posts for my cats, I don't quite get down on my hands and knees to scratch for myself, but I do try to view the scratchers from the feline perspective. I have no complaints about horizontal scratchers. In fact, there's a plethora of wonderful shapes and sizes out there. It's the upright posts that are a problem for my cats, because most of them are too short.

Like many of their furry relatives, Cali and Fudge like to stand up, stretch and scratch vertically. When Fudge stands on her hind legs and puts her paws up, she reaches nearly 3 feet long. And she isn't even a big breed! So what is a bigger cat such as a Maine Coon supposed to do apart from attack furniture in its quest for something tall to get its claws into?

Personally, I am not a fan of carpeted posts because Cali and Fudge have trouble differentiating between them and my Royal Tapeit hand-knotted rug. In fact, they now are so well-trained that even when I brought home a nice, tall, carpeted post with rubber feet that you could lean against a wall at any angle, they totally ignored it. Their favorite scratching materials are sisal and corrugated cardboard, both of which I also give the two-pass-up stamp of approval.

It took a bit of investigating but eventually I located a sturdy sisal post of excellent proportions, but I simply couldn't find anything to match it in corrugated cardboard.

In desperation, I called Dan Peacock, cat scratcher designer extraordinaire at Imperial Cat, a company that specializes in furniture that lets cats scratch, and pleaded for help.

"You design it, and I'll make it," he offered.

An irresistible challenge!

Initially, I wanted a scratcher that stood at least 3 feet tall.

He quickly pointed out that a tall design must have a solid base so it won't topple over. We tossed ideas around and finally went back to the ancient Egyptians for our inspiration. The result: a pyramid-shaped design that stands 40 inches high.

In order to turn it into an all-around play station, we added a cat-shaped cutout in the middle, giving cats that prefer horizontal scratching a place to have fun, too.

The next stage of development was to turn it over to Dan's cat Ratty to test it for us and to ensure that the cutout was a safe play area. Then the prototype was shipped to Cali and Fudge to check out. Dan was kind enough to include a little bag of catnip, which I rubbed into the sides, and they haven't left it alone since. For the first time, Fudge can really stretch — and scratch.

Usually when I moan about something, I don't get the opportunity to fix the problem. I was grateful to Dan for listening and following through. So, naturally, I've named it after him, calling it the Imperial Peacock Pyramid. What's more, if you flip it over on its side it makes a fabulous scratching ramp too.

I love watching my cats really getting their claws into it. From a people-perspective, it looks like they are getting rid of all their inhibitions and venting. Now I'm thinking of asking Dan to design a scratching post for me. These are times when I would love to get hold of some corrugated cardboard and vent, too. ☺

*Sandy Robins is an award-winning pet lifestyle expert who appears regularly on TV, radio and in international publications. She is an obsessed pet owner to her cats Cali and Fudge.*

