

Backyard Poultry Basics: Chickens and your Garden

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Why Chickens?

- Free/Low-cost
 - Fertilizer
 - Weed Control
 - Pest Control
 - Soil Building
 - Eggs
- Easy Maintenance
- Easy Addition to Yards



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How to get started!




- Figure out zoning rules/regulations
 - Residential Zones will need a permit
 - HOA may not allow poultry.
 - Do you logistically have room for a garden and chicken coop?
- Prepare, Prepare, Prepare
 - Have everything set up BEFORE you get your chickens!
 - Run, Coop, Nest boxes, Feeders, water,
 - Learn about caring for chickens (Backyard Poultry Seminar)
 - Plan out your garden set-up so you know when chickens will have access or not.

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First Things First...

- Housing
 - Again, depending on zoning rules/regulations
 - Chickens will need...
 - Run- Outside area to move about, could be fully enclosed, preferably access to the ground (no flooring).
 - Coop- Fully enclosed area to be housed at night.
 - Nest Box- Small area to brood/lay.
 - Roost- Post, at least 8 inches long, to roost at.
 - Minimum 3 sq. ft. per bird, Nest Boxes should be 1 cubic ft.



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Chicken Tractors



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Who Rules the Roost?

Nesting

- Boxes should be 2 ft above the floor
- Approx. 1 ft²
 - Bigger chickens need bigger boxes, smaller chickens can get away with smaller boxes
- **AT LEAST ONE NEST BOX PER CHICKEN. MORE IS BETTER**
 - Some chickens are very broody and will hog nest boxes, less competition is better for happy chickens


Roosting

- Chickens post somewhere above ground (usually where chicken sleeps)
- **8 inch roost minimum**
- Build drop boards under roosts to collect waste (most occurs at night when roosting)
 - Easy clean up and ability to compost

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Feeding Your Chickens



- **Layer Hen Feed**
 - Pellets, crumbles,
 - ~16% protein or more
 - 4-5% calcium for egg production (oyster shells should not be fed to chickens under 18 weeks)
 - 0.3% to 0.8% Salt
 - Electrolytes in water
 - Can waste money and can cause mineral imbalances
 - May need mineral mix if not included feed

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Feeding Your Chickens



- Marigold extracts
 - Provide better coloring of chicken and egg yolk
- **Medicated feeds**
 - Protects against coccidiosis (doesn't allow bacteria to break down amino acids)
 - **DO NOT FEED TO VACCINATED BIRDS**
- **PROVIDE CLEAN WATER AND REDUCE STRESS TO ENCOURAGE CONSISTENT EATING HABITS**
- **Scratch feed/table scraps are not a complete feed and will not meet chicken's needs for proper egg production!**
 - Feed your chickens well and you will eat well!

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Do's and Don'ts for Happy Chickens





Do's

- 2 Feeders
- 2 Water Sources
- Multiple Nest Boxes/Roosts
- Room to move around
- Shade!

Don'ts

- Don't Use wood shavings/ cedar chips as litter material
- Don't Refrigerate Eggs
 - Suction pulls bacteria into the egg,
 - You won't be able to wash them properly
- Don't Ignore sick chickens!
Be observant.

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Basic Biosecurity



- Always wash hands after handling chickens or chicken equipment!
- Recommended to wash soles of your shoes before entering your home.
- Do not handle other chickens and then come home and handle your own
- Wash/Disinfect equipment frequently.




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Incorporating Chickens into your Garden Plans



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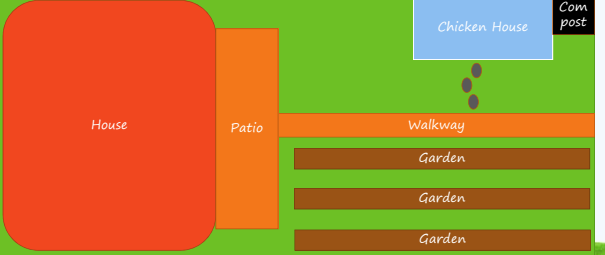
Design Schemes for Garden Access



• MotherEarthNews
• By Patricia Foreman and Cheryl Long; Illustrations by Elayne Sears

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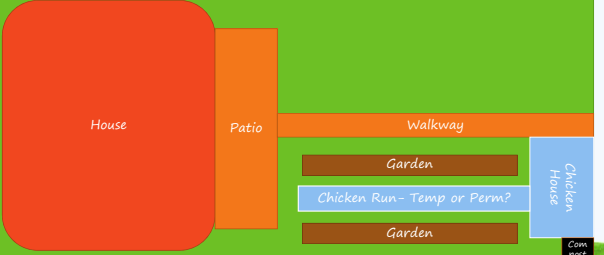
Free-Range Set up



Labels: House, Patio, Walkway, Garden, Garden, Garden, Chicken House, Com post

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Limited Access Run




Labels: House, Patio, Walkway, Garden, Garden, Chicken Run - Temp or Perm?, Chicken House, Com post

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Design Schemes for Garden Access

- It is not recommended to allow chickens complete access to gardens 24/7.
 - Chicken Manure should not come into contact with fresh vegetables due to salmonella concerns (compost!)
 - Manure is high in nitrates and ammonia and can burn plants or over fertilize. Too much of a good thing is bad!



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Endless options..

- Design/Plan it out
 - Specifications of your yard
 - Size restrictions
 - Number of birds
 - Size of garden
 - Based on your needs/wants
- MAKE IT PRACTICAL!
 - Financially and Logistically.



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Preparing a new garden?

- One chicken can till 50 sq. ft. in just 4-6 weeks.
 - Create temporary fencing, or move your chicken tractor over the area.
- Chickens will fertilize as they till!
 - 1 chicken= fertilizer for 50 sq. ft.
 - Be cautious with length of time, too much nitrogen can be bad for your garden
- Chickens can and will spread mulching material for you!
- Use Chickens to turn your compost piles
 - And use their manure to add nitrogen to compost!
 - Careful, a little goes a long way



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Already have an established garden?

- Use chickens as Bug Patrol!
 - Fence perimeter of garden with chicken run to prevent crawling insects and attract slugs away from your garden.
 - Allow Chickens to free range for up to an hour in your garden, enough time to get the bugs but not your plants!
- Use Chickens as Weed Control!
 - Allow chickens to free-range AFTER plants are full established, they will eat any sprouting weeds.
 - Supervised free ranging for short periods of time.
 - Runs through rows of plants.
- Continue using manure as compost material!
 - Great nitrogen source

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What's the best fit?

- What are your main goals for your chickens?
 - Egg Producers that help in the garden every now and then?
 - Garden Helpers that produce eggs now and then?
- Main Goals for your garden?
 - Vegetable production
 - Aesthetics
 - Seasonality
- Goals for your involvement?
 - Management level- How intensive?
 - Every day gardener or weekend gardener?



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DANGER ZONE

- Cannibalism
 - Chickens are often cannibalistic
 - Beak trimming can reduce injuries
 - Reduce stress/competition
 - Attracted to the color red and will gravitate towards injured chicken, separate injured until healed if possible
- Litter/Manure
 - If used in gardens must be side dressed or composted due to bacteria (salmonella)
 - Do not allow contact with roots of plants
 - Allow adequate ventilation and moisture control to reduce ammonia smell
 - Clean out/replace litter on a regular schedule (6 months to a year depending)

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DANGER ZONE

- Salmonella Concerns
 - ALWAYS WASH HANDS AFTER HANDLING CHICKENS/EQUIPMENT
 - Keep coop, nest boxes, roosts clean
 - Disinfect feeders/waterers frequently
 - Keep environment clean and dry, especially during summer months when heat can promote bacteria growth
- Bird Health/Avian Flu
 - Know your birds! If one starts to show signs of sickness, investigate quickly!
 - Keep in contact with a local veterinarian (who treats avian species) in case questions arise!

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Popular Breeds

- Laying Breeds
 - Golden Comet (Hybrid)
 - Rhode Island Red
 - White Leghorn
 - Sussex (dual purpose)
 - Plymouth Rock (easy keeper)
 - Ancona (small chicken/small eggs)
 - Bantamvelder (small to medium, not a good flyer)
 - Marans (dual purpose, brown eggs)
 - Buff Orpington (low eggs, broody, very tame)
- Meat Breeds
 - Cornish Cross
 - Jersey Giant
 - Delaware
 - Dorking
 - Buckeye



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