Amazing Chickens: Good for you, Good for the Garden
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Basics of Chicken Keeping

Types of Chickens
- What are your chicken-keeping needs?
  - General disposition/as Pets—therapeutic
  - Layer hens
  - Meat for consumption
  - Space requirements—standard vs. bantam

What you need to get started
- Consider
  - Location/zoning laws—Just do it!
  - Neighbors
  - Urban/suburban/rural setting—They all work!
- Shelter
  - Safety first! Cute coops are not always safe omlet.us
- Water supply
  - Fresh water supply—pond, etc.
  - Prevent freezing
- Food
  - Omnivorous, Cannibalistic
  - Avoid meats and avocado

Requirements for raising chicks
- Mail order specifics
  - Minimum number for shipment
  - Limited delivery options
  - mypetchicken.com (mixed breeds, low-minimum requirement)
  - Upon receipt, check your chicks for pasty butt (and every day!)
- Climate controlled-environment
  - Day-old chicks: 95°F for 7 days
  - Subtract 5°F every 7 days thereafter, until ambient temperature is reached AND/OR chicks are fully feathered out
- Bedding/floor-surface requirements
  - Wood shavings (no cedar)
  - Keep bedding clean—change every day
- Care
  - Heat lamp
  - Chick feed
  - Clean water every day
  - Safety
  - No cold drafts
  - Space
  - SOCIALIZATION—play with them!

Pecking order/introducing new chicks
- Pecking order changes, not always based on size
• Introducing a new chick or pullet to your established flock comes with risk
  o Possible parasite/disease introduction (each flock has a balance)
  o Gradual introduction is imperative
    ▪ Use separate cage in close quarters before they join in larger cage

Good for the Garden

NO Toxic chemicals/fertilizers
• Treat your garden chickens as pets—limit chemicals you are willing to use in the garden
• Chickens will try to eat anything in your garden
• Chickens eggs are, essentially, everything they eat
  o Would you want chemicals in your breakfast?

Pest Control—lessens need for pesticides
• Chickens eat ticks, mosquitos, flies, worms, grubs, etc. (ground bugs)
• Beneficial bugs
• Chickens eat frogs, mice, rats, voles, moles, etc.

Natural compost
• Chicken droppings serve as natural fertilizer for your lawn
• Collected droppings from coop tray can be put in compost bin
  o Composting is a science—you will need to do research about proper ratios

Eggs
• Saving energy/fossil fuel usage by reducing drives to the grocery store
• 9 months of the year, you will likely have fresh eggs every day
• Reducing your profit to CAFOs
Good for the Soul

Chickens in your garden are calming and soothing

- Cluck in a gentle way
- They scratch in the soil
- Relaxing and pleasant to have around you—unless they are fighting. I noticed right away a calming effect on myself.

Therapy animals

- Chickens are being used more widely as therapy animals
- Easier and more cost-effective than other therapy animals
- Used to help senior citizens, Alzheimer’s patients, children and adults with special needs

More links

- *Meet Darla, the Therapy chicken helping to educate her community* [http://abcn.ws/2CWipFj](http://abcn.ws/2CWipFj)

Zoning and Ordinance

First steps

- Every case will be different/specific
  - Plenty of people have them (and yet encounter no problems from the township)
- Talk to your neighbors—a good relationship will help your case
- Find a community of supporters
  - Camden County Chicken Group: [camdencountychickens.org](http://camdencountychickens.org)
- Decide all your details, in the event you have to build a case
  - How many chickens you plan to have
  - What is the purpose of keeping your chickens
  - How it may impact neighbors
  - Garden aesthetics: coop design, trees to block view, etc.

Building a case—big IF

- Hire professional planner to help design parts of property
- Poll and send letter to neighbors explaining how it impacts their properties
- Possibly pay for special zoning permit from township
- Prepare proof of benefits of chickens

JUST DO IT!