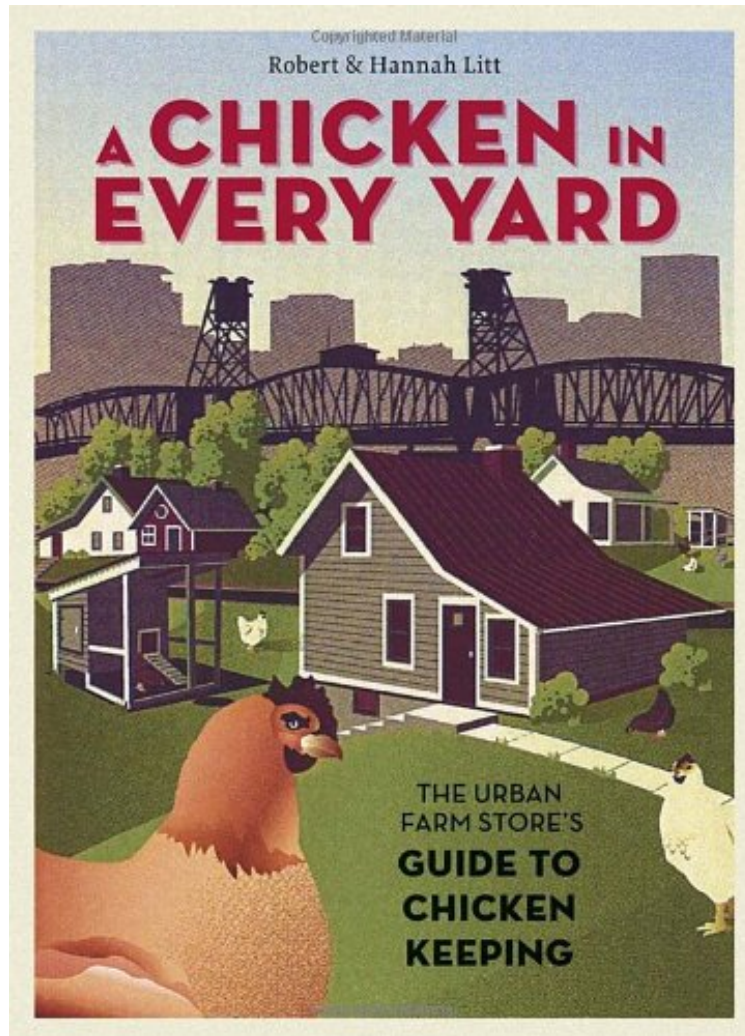


(Download free ebook) A Chicken in Every Yard: The Urban Farm Store's Guide to Chicken Keeping

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Robert Litt, Hannah Litt

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#213066 in Books Robert Litt 2011-03-22 2011-03-22 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.25 x .92 x 6.801, 1.56 #File Name: 1580085822208 pages A Chicken in Every Yard The Urban Farm Store s Guide to Chicken Keeping | File size: 28.Mb

Robert Litt, Hannah Litt : A Chicken in Every Yard: The Urban Farm Store's Guide to Chicken Keeping before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Chicken in Every Yard: The Urban Farm Store's Guide to Chicken Keeping:

192 of 194 people found the following review helpful. the perfect book for keeping urban and suburban chickens By Silea This is the only book you need if you want to keep a few chickens in your yard. Flipping through a lot of the other highly-rated chicken books, it quickly became clear that most of them are oriented toward large-scale chicken keeping. Sure, some have added token acknowledgement that some people keep chickens as pets that happen to lay eggs, but

the tone and the information are suited toward people who don't plan to name their chickens or tell stories about their antics. They're low on details about how tall a fence should be to keep the chickens from ravaging your vegetable garden, and discredit methods like clipping wings because it's just not viable if you have 200 birds. If you want to experience the joy of cracking open an egg still warm from the chicken, of knowing exactly what the chicken ate and how it was cared for, of knowing that the only carbon footprint involved in your breakfast was your trip down to the feed store every few months, this is the book for you. If you have no plans whatsoever of eating your chicken just because it stopped laying 7 eggs a week, this is the book for you. If you want a practical guide for housing chickens in a small urban back yard, heck, this book even has detailed plans for building a simple but safe coop and run. It even has a neat breakdown of how much time you will need to set aside for caring for your birds (five minutes in the morning to feed and collect eggs and let the birds out, five minutes in the evening to feed and collect eggs, and lock the door of the coop, 20 minutes once a week to add more bedding, and so on) so you have some idea of what time commitment you're actually making. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. This is by far my favorite chicken book for suburban backyard chicken keepers. I had bought the Stoney's book on recommendations from the internet and it was very in depth and had a lot of information, but maybe a little too overwhelming at first for a newbie. I prefer "A Chicken in Every Yard" as a beginner book. It has everything I need to know to get started and is written very simply and easy to understand while also covering all of the must need basis. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Good review before starting a new flock. By Lynn C. Behnke. Very informative. We got this book when we were ready to get back into having semi-urban chickens after a few years without. It was a good review. I wouldn't recommend first timers read about all the possible diseases. It could be discouraging. It has been our experience that predators are much more likely to take a small flock than disease. We keep looking for a way to protect our free-range chickens, but even our own dog killed some when he got loose. Neighborhood dogs have led two massacres. I was able to beat off a hawk with a broom when it swooped down to pick up a rooster once. We are looking at having to pen our ladies, which is a shame because our two survivors currently come onto the front porch once a day and leave an egg in a straw-filled cardboard box by the front door. What service! They run to greet us and scold us if we run out of meal worms. A new batch of 11 teenage chicks are about ready to leave the heat lamp, and they will have to go into a fenced area. It's just too hard to hear squawking and barking and run out to find piles of feathers.

Got a little space and a hankering for fresh eggs? Robert and Hannah Litt have dispensed advice to hundreds of urban and suburban chicken-keepers from behind their perch at Portland's Urban Farm Store, and now they're ready to help you go local and sustainable with your own backyard birds. In this handy guide to breeds, feed, coops, and care, the Litts take you under their experienced wings and share the secrets to: Picking the breeds that are right for you Building a sturdy coop in one weekend for \$100 Raising happy and hearty chicks Feeding your flock for optimal health and egg nutrition Preventing and treating common chicken diseases Planning ahead for family, neighborhood, and legal considerations Whipping up tasty egg recipes from flan to frittata With everything that first-timers will need to get started along with expert tips for more seasoned keepers this colorful, nuts-and-bolts manual proves that keeping chickens is all its cracked up to be.

Backyard chickening may be the best next step beyond backyard gardening. Leveraging their own experience with their Oregon customers shared wisdom, Robert and Hannah bring to every aspiring next stepper a mentoring book that can nudge anyone into micro-eggery. JOEL SALATIN, founder of Polyface Farm, author of *You Can Farm*, and contributor to *Food, Inc.: A Participant Guide* This is the guide to raising chickens that I desperately needed when I first started urban farming. Robert and Hannah have seen it all when it comes to raising cluckers. NOVELLA CARPENTER, author of *Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer* About the Author Robert and Hannah Litt are the founders of the Urban Farm Store in Portland, Oregon. They've been featured on Planet Greens Renovation Nation, National Public Radio, and Oregon Public Broadcasting, and Robert was recently named to *Food Wine* magazine's 40 Big Food Thinkers Under 40. Visit www.urbanfarmstore.com and www.achickenineveryyard.com. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1: Why Keep Chickens? When we tell someone that we have seven chickens living in our backyard, there is usually a brief silence, followed by a curious Why? Hannah will counter, Why not? They're great pets, charming, and useful, too. Indeed, which of your other pets provide you with wholesome, protein-rich food and ask so little in return? Does your dog keep the bug population at bay in your backyard? Will the cat mow the lawn for you? Besides these practical considerations, we think chickens are just plain fun to be around! We derive so much delight from observing the antics of our hens that we would likely keep them even if they did not lay. Indeed, many of our customers are surprised and pleased to discover that chickens have a certain kind of grace and can be truly beautiful. Because of this, Hannah likes to call them mobile lawn ornaments. Robert gains the deepest satisfaction from watching them methodically graze the lawn or scratch through the compost seeking hidden bugs. As he cares for these long-domesticated animals, he feels a deep connection to the land and to a not-too-distant agrarian past. Chickens are at once so useful, colorful, and entertaining that we can no longer imagine our lives without them.

Best of all, our hearts swell each time we see the look of absolute delight and fascination in the eyes of children when they see their first live chicken bounding across the lawn toward them, or when they hold a warm, fuzzy chick. Children seem to know intuitively that chickens are special creatures with a lot to teach us all about nature and ourselves.

Quality of Life and Sustainability

The chicken is best known as the producer of that humble staple food, the egg. Although the egg is familiar to all, we can safely say that you have never truly experienced its full potential until you have eaten one laid by one of your own hens and cracked open and cooked while still warm. Not only will its deeply colored yolk and firm white taste richer and more flavorful than you ever imagined an egg could, but this special egg will provide an immense satisfaction earned from your role in its production. Backyard hens enjoy an enviable lifestyle compared to their commercial counterparts. Even so-called free-range hens often suffer from crowding in immense, climate-controlled barns; your hens, on the other hand, will enjoy a relatively carefree life full of affection, quality food, and fresh air. Couple that with the opportunity to preserve older, heritage breeds and their unique traits, and you can see why Robert likes to say that keeping a home flock truly allows chickens to be real chickens. Another thing we love about producing our own eggs in the backyard is that they don't have to travel to reach our table. When it comes to commercial eggs, organic included, the fragile orbs are typically deeply chilled to preserve them and then trucked many miles to your plate. Even eggs with distant use-by dates usually were laid weeks, if not months before and are no longer anywhere near their best. Keeping a few hens in the backyard is a great way to conserve resources by eating food that's grown so close at hand that the local label is more appropriately replaced by homegrown. This is one reason many so-called locavores have especially embraced backyard animal husbandry. Only chickens and a few other small animals can provide high-quality protein in the city or suburbs. It's easy to see where your food comes from and even easier to get to know the farmers when they eat breakfast with you!

Some backyard chicken keepers do raise birds for meat, and if you eat chicken, this is certainly a good way to ensure that the birds you are eating had a happy life and ate well while they were alive. This will not be a major focus of this book, however, because the vast majority of backyard chicken keepers regard their chickens as pets and find it unsettling if not outright upsetting to consider eating them. We feel that this is a choice for the chicken keeper to make; we take no position either way. If you are interested in learning more about harvesting your birds for meat, visit www.urbanfarmstore.com to find more information and links to useful resources. Finally, it's important to consider that the eggs (and meat) from your backyard buddies will contain a more optimal balance of nutrients than their store-bought rivals. As we'll discuss in chapter 8, recent findings suggest that eggs from small, pasture-raised flocks (like yours) are lower in cholesterol and have a healthier ratio of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids than even organic, free-range eggs from the store. Remarkably, the nutritional comparison also showed that these eggs were higher in several important vitamins and minerals. Eggs that taste great, are laid by happy hens, and are good for your health—what could be better than that? We'll go into a lot more detail about eggs in the chapter we've creatively titled Eggs.

Affection

Although few chickens show their owners the blatant dog or cat sort of love, many of our customers report that they have a mutually affectionate relationship with their hens. Some birds do seem to genuinely enjoy human company and will seek physical contact. Our store manager, Sharon, has just this sort of relationship with most of her birds. At the store she regularly picks up and handles our Crested Polish hen, Muppet, who shows her appreciation for the affection by cooing and burrowing into Sharon's arms. At home, she has birds that are sometimes invited indoors to watch TV on her shoulders. Although it's debatable how much chickens enjoy demonstrative humans, it is clear that their owners often become very emotionally connected to them. Our customers joyfully share tales of first eggs, humorous antics, and moments of concern for their birds' well-being, clearly indicating that strong emotional bonds form with these animals as with other pets.

Educational Value

Some of you may have grown up on a farm and experienced firsthand the many life lessons that caring for livestock can provide for young children. For the rest of us, our childhood experiences with farm animals were probably limited to petting zoos and fuzzy-paged children's books. If you had some direct experience, keeping a few hens in the yard is a terrific way to pass on what you know. If not, it's a great opportunity to learn together as a family project. Either way, it's clear that kids seem to get a special kind of enjoyment from chickens. The sense of responsibility for and connection with the natural world that children develop from caring for any animal is immeasurably valuable. If that animal happens to offer eggs in exchange for the care, the bond created is even more powerful. When a child picks up his or her first egg from the nest, this incredibly nutritious food becomes very intriguing indeed. You might even find that a kiddo who used to turn up her nose at scrambled eggs suddenly begins to clamor for them. We have seen many children come into the store who have clearly been studying their chickens. They can recite the exact names of breeds they own, often pronouncing the sometimes complex words better than their parents. Some of them have even written essays and book reports on chicken keeping, astounding us with their encyclopedic knowledge. Others have brought their prized birds into their classrooms for show-and-tell events—much to the delight of their classmates, no doubt. Whether learning proper holding techniques, hen-housekeeping procedures, or feeding routines, these kids really seem to enjoy finding out all there is to know about their unusual and compelling pets. Many local schools in our area now have chicken coops because of their tremendous educational value. Of course, students and teachers have been raising chicks and even hatching eggs in classrooms for years. Usually, the lesson plan will center on biological aspects of the chicken life cycle, embryology, and other

developmental topics. These days, our teacher customers have also been raising and keeping the chicks into adulthood to teach their students about where food comes from, nutrition, and sustainability. If the chickens become ill, or when they eventually pass on, there are even deeper lessons to deliver to young ones. For adults and children alike, there is undeniable sorrow associated with the loss of any pet, and chickens are no exception. However, unlike dogs and cats, who regularly live over a decade, chickens will usually live only four years or so (up to eight under ideal circumstances). This fact means that you and your family will need to face the transient nature of life relatively often. Although this could be seen as a liability, we prefer to use the occasion of a hen passing as a time to reflect on the unique give-and-take these creatures share with us and ponder our own place in the natural cycle of life. That said, we have also helped several parents hurriedly replace chicks that have died suddenly, slipping them into the brooding box before the kids come home from school to discover the loss. You can play it either way.

Aesthetic Value Another reason to keep chickens is that they are just plain appealing to look at. Chickens have long been appreciated for their feather colors and attractive forms, traits that have earned them a place in the art of cultures around the globe. Beyond their appearance, chickens have a unique gait that seems at once comical and graceful. They probe their environment with scratching and pecking motions that we find endlessly fascinating. A flock of chickens adds such a beautiful sense of movement to your garden that this alone makes them a worthwhile addition to your yard. To accentuate this beauty, most of our customers choose a variety of different breeds, rather than raising a flock of all one type. In our breeds chapter (chapter 3), you will discover that chickens not only come in different colors but also have different feather patterns, sizes, and even body shapes. Chickens are available in a startling variety of breeds, from delicately laced-patterned Wyandottes (as seen on page xi) to Silkies, which look more like fur-bearing mammals than birds. Then there are the truly bizarre breeds: Naked Necks resembling vultures, frizzled breeds with heavily twisted and crimped feathers, and feather-footed, orblike Cochins, to name a few. In fact, there are enough types of chickens out there to keep the backyard flock owner researching and pursuing new varieties to collect year after year. Or, as many people do, they may decide to specialize in a favorite one, even going so far as to breed them or ordering eggs to hatch themselves.

Before Hannah got her first batch of chickens, she spent months poring over catalogs, books, and online resources, deciding which breeds were the best and most beautiful. Aesthetics should be considered, because your birds will be a long-term feature of your backyard, but we think that each breed and individual has its merits. That said, we would like to tell you that we have never had an ugly chicken, but that would be a lie. Her name was Springsteen (because she was a Jersey Giant), but she was neither giant nor did she have the attractive, glossy black plumage characteristic of the breed. Her dull gray-black feathers were unevenly distributed over her body, leaving bare patches that became tough and reddened from exposure. She was an eyesore and rather unappetizing to look at when we ate dinner on the patio. We probably would have kept her despite her pitiful appearance, if it were not for her bullying of the other hens in our flock. Her saving grace was that she was a prolific layer of enormous eggs, which made it possible to pawn her off on a farmer friend of ours. Call us shallow, but for us it's not only about the eggs.

Fun and Humor Regardless of their motivations for crossing roads, chickens are just plain funny. It seems that some of our customers make visits to the store just to relate the latest antics of their hens. One woman told us her chickens love to entertain themselves by swinging on her hammock. They hop up on the edge and flutter their wings, trying to keep their balance as the hammock swings wildly to and fro. Another customer's hen likes to head-butt her cat. Our own wily chickens tag-team unsuspecting guests at backyard barbecues: one chicken will approach the victim and provide a distraction while her partner in crime hops up and neatly snags the desired food right out of the victim's hand. This has happened enough times now that we are convinced these chickens truly are in cahoots. Finally, we occasionally have our own little Easter egg hunt when a clever chicken of ours decides to hide her eggs in a new location. Once we found a cache of twelve eggs inside a pole bean trellis. Another time she had us completely stumped until we went out to the composter and nearly dumped out the compost pail onto a little collection of eggs that she had been hiding there! It's hard to know whether our hens are intentionally having fun with us, but it sure seems like it.

Garden Helpers Another great virtue of a backyard flock is their eagerness to pitch in around the garden. They are expert insect hunters and can make a substantial dent in the population of unwanted garden pests, such as slugs and tomato-chomping caterpillars, while having little effect on populations of most beneficial ones, like ladybugs. Though earthworms are hardly pests, they are generally abundant, and your birds will also avail themselves of a worm whenever possible, transforming them into a quick, high-protein snack, and eventually into an egg. Now that's true alchemy! Chickens are not just hunters; fallen fruit and other potentially wasted garden produce will be quickly consumed as well. Beyond scavenging, they also eat green plants with a methodical intensity. A small flock of hens grazing a lawn are tapping into a valuable nutritional resource, all the while helping to reduce your mowing chores. In fact, the American lawn of today looks the way it does because it's an idealization of a grazed, pastoral landscape. Returning animals to the pasture, even on a tiny scale, just makes sense to us.

This gusto for plant browsing also has its drawbacks. Chickens are big fans of leafy ornamental plants like hostas, and if given free rein they will mow them down faster than you can say locusts! Similarly, chickens will gladly devour your lettuces, spinach, kale, and other green leafy vegetables. It's possible to grow a plant palette that avoids becoming expensive chicken food; for example, they will generally avoid herbs and other strongly scented plants. But you will likely want to fence off or otherwise protect your prized

ornamentals and veggies before you sort out what your flock will and wont want to eat. (For further information, see Chickens in the Garden, page 124.)Chickens will also scratch the earth in search of tasty tidbits, making shallow holes and possibly exposing the roots of plants. Although this activity is usually harmless, you should keep it in mind when planning your garden-protection scheme. You can harness these nibbling and digging tendencies to help you in the garden as well. Chickens can be confined to a pen or other structure and made to concentrate their digging and foliage chomping in a small area, effectively clearing it for future planting.Perhaps the greatest assist that your birds will provide in the garden will come not from the beak end of the bird, but from the other. Your flocks pooping practices will produce enough soiled bedding to supercharge your compost pile, and they will spread nutrients wherever they are allowed to roam. Contrary to popular belief, widely dispersed chicken poop in this form will not burn your plants (though it is advisable to hot-compost larger amounts of poultry waste to ensure that any potentially harmful organisms are eliminated). Indeed, we have noticed a marked improvement in the health of plants in the backyard, where the chickens live, compared to the front yard, from which they are excluded. Chickens and gardens seem to love each others company, and we think that you will love the combination, too.