

# URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

## How to: Have chickens in the garden

Chickens may seem like a wonderful asset all on their own with their egg production and quaint, country feel, but they can actually be very beneficial when used correctly in the garden. Chickens can benefit your garden in several ways.

### The benefits:

There are several benefits to having chickens pecking away near or in your garden. These include:

**Compost benefits:** Chickens produce a lot of manure, which can be included in your compost pile to increase the nitrogen. Chicken manure is very rich in nitrogen with a 10:1 ratio, which a little will go a long way in bettering your compost pile. Harvest the flock's manure and store it alone or with its carbon counterpart materials until you are ready to use it in your compost pile. Also, if you don't want to go to the effort to add the manure to compost, chickens also can help your compost pile receive the right amount of oxygen in order for the compost to work correctly. Set your chickens loose near your compost pile instead of turning the compost regularly yourself.

**Tilling machines:** Chickens acts as live tillers, and they can till 50 square feet in four weeks. They work as tillers because they scratch and peck at anything that's vegetation. They are healthier for the environment than tillers are, but a negative is chickens will till everything - even the areas of your garden you don't want tilled. Direct your little tillers to the right areas by putting



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up fencing around the areas you want protected.

**Insect control:** Chickens like to munch on all sorts of different types of insects. By directing the chickens in the right area with fencing, you can watch as they eat all the bugs that otherwise might harm your garden.

### The negatives:

Although chickens in the garden seem to bring a lot of positive benefits with them, like any good thing, they also have some negative qualities and things to look out for as well.

**Exposing roots:** Chickens like to peck and scratch at the ground a lot, and while this may mean a much more limited bug population, it also can destroy your plants by exposing the roots and then killing them.

**Destroying the garden:** If you let your



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chickens run free through your garden, they may end up destroying your vegetables or eating them.

### **Protecting your garden:**

Chickens can still be free-range, just go through the struggle to protect the parts of your yard or garden you want protected. Chickens bring so many benefits with them that it's important to protect against the negatives so you can still reap the positives from owning chickens in the garden. Establish fenced areas, or periodically move your chicken run around to the areas you want the chicken to focus on.

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