

Do Chickens and Gardens Mix?

This is a perfectly sensible question to ask, and one which will result in some newsletter readers shaking their heads. This is because in their experience they don't mix. Well that isn't an untrue statement, but then by the same measure of truth it could also be said that children and gardens don't mix, or dogs and gardens don't mix.



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A good garden is one where thought and design have been applied according to its use. Many of us have or have had children and or dogs romping around the garden and we've made compensations to allow for it. So by the same measure it's not impossible to have chickens in the garden, and for that mix to be enjoyable and beneficial for both the gardener and the flock; you just need to plan and design accordingly.

We use chickens as helpers because for all their 'misplaced enthusiasm' in the garden, they are in fact quite useful. They help in the control of pests, eat weeds, mow the lawn, compost green waste and improve soil condition. As a collective they quite possibly do the work of one person in the garden throughout the year and lay fantastic healthy eggs too. I won't wax lyrical though and claim they are no problem at all as I do need to control where they go, and protect some plants and crops from the attentions. Compared to the benefits they deliver though, coupled with beauty and movement they bring to the look of the garden, it's worth it.

Your garden is an ecosystem which, to many extents, the balance of which is under your control. If that ecosystem is to remain healthy then you need to observe and understand the way it works. Adding an appropriately sized flock of chickens introduces another aspect to the ecosystem but one which is most definitely within your control, and under your management. Making sure the flock compliments and contributes towards the balance of the garden is key, and stocking too heavily or ranging too intensively will lead to problems. That said, if you take your time and you will find chickens and gardens can mix.



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