

12

of the

Best

CHICKEN
BREEDS

for your



FIRST FLOCK

By Kerrie Hubbard from City Girl Farming



CITY GIRL FARMING & art

WHAT CHICKS ARE BEST?

You're ready to start your first flock...but...there are dozens, even hundreds of choices for the kinds of chickens you could bring home...how do you know which breeds are best for your backyard?

The answer to that question depends somewhat on what your goals are for keeping chickens. Is having your own backyard eggs the most important thing? Or maybe you want a kid-friendly flock so your children can be involved? Perhaps having a variety of colorful, unique eggs is your hope.

There are so many fantastic breeds of chickens out there that it might feel like it's hard to pick which to choose. However, getting clear on your 'whys' will help you decide which breeds of chickens will work best for you.



When thinking about the breeds you might want to add to your flock, consider your desires and needs, the place the chickens will live, and if you have a strong preference for certain personality traits or egg colors.

For instance, if you live in an area with a small backyard where your chickens won't be able to free-range, pick breeds that don't mind being confined. If you care more about the number of eggs versus color, pick breeds that are good layers, if you live in very hot or very cold climates, pick hot or cold-hardy varieties.

THE BEST BACKYARD BREEDS

If you talk to 10 different chicken keepers, you'll probably hear 35 different 'favorites' from them! It's hard to pick just one.

The good news is that feed stores largely cater to backyard chicken keepers, so you'll end up with good chickens, regardless. As you spend time with your chickens, over the years you'll eventually develop a preference for some breeds over others.

But for now, let's look at twelve breeds that do very well in the backyard flock.

AUSTRALORP



Australorps, beautiful black feathered hens, are pretty much everything you'd want in a backyard bird. They're friendly, good with kids, calm, quiet, and are egg-laying superstars (laying around 5 brown eggs per week).

These hens are a great choice for any sized flock (urban, suburban, or rural) you might be creating.

BARNEVELDER

Barnevelder hens are a Dutch breed that are becoming a standard in other places as well. They're known for their beautiful feather patterns and gentle personality. They lay 3-4 large chocolate brown eggs per week and will lay through the winter.

Barnevelders are super easy-going, cold-hardy and do okay in confinement.



BARRED ROCK



Barred Rock chickens (also known as Plymouth Rock) are one of the oldest breeds in the USA dating back to the 1800's.

Barred Rocks are sweet, friendly, easy-going, and lay 4+ medium-sized light brown eggs per week. They're also quiet, making them a great pick for an urban flock.

BLACK COPPER MARAN

Black Copper Maran hens are gentle and quiet. They don't need a lot of space, so this is a good urban choice for the backyard.

While they only lay 3 eggs per week, the eggs are very dark brown making them sought after by those who like a variety of egg colors.

They don't do well in hot climates.



BUFF ORPINGTON



There are several colors of Orpington chickens, but the buff color is the most popular for backyard flocks.

Buff Orpington hens are sweet, docile, and will seek out your attention. They're great with children and also make good mothers themselves.

They're also another quiet breed. They lay 4+ large brown eggs per week.

BUCKEYE



Buckeye chickens are the only breed attributed to a woman! They're docile, calm, cold hearty, and good with children. In fact, they like to follow you around.

They're also known to be as good of a 'mouser' as a barn cat!

They lay 3-4 brown eggs per week.

COCHIN

Cochins come in many colors (pictured here is a Blue Cochin). They're like a big bumbling 'Cookie Monster' and are known for being super sweet. In fact, they're often thought of more as a pet than as part of the flock, making them a good choice for kids.

While they only lay 3-4 brown eggs per week, they're sweet personality makes up for it.



DELAWARE



The Delaware chicken is a heritage breed that is making a comeback after being critically endangered.

Besides their bright white feathers and black speckled neck, they're known for being calm, friendly, curious, quiet, and intelligent.

They lay 4+ large/jumbo brown eggs per week.

EASTER EGGER/AMERICANA



This 'mutt breed' chicken is one of the backyard favorites because they're curious, great with kids, gentle AND lay a variety of colorful eggs--blue, olive, white or pink-ish (they will only lay one color of eggs, but it could be any of the above colors).

They're known by different names because they're not a standardized breed (and hence why you won't know the color of eggs you'll get until she starts laying.)

RED STAR

Red Star hens are the best layers of them all.

They're also a 'sex link' breed meaning you know by the feather patterns when they're born if they are a girl or a boy (which means you won't accidentally bring home a rooster)!

Besides being a great layer, Red Star's are known for being docile, both heat and cold hearty, and one of the few breeds that will lay through the winter.



SILKIE



Silkie chickens are a favorite breed because of their small size, unique look, and sweet personality. Like the Cochin, they're often thought of as pets.

This breed is calm, friendly, and docile (even the roosters).

They lay 3-4 small to medium cream-colored eggs per week.

SPECKLED SUSSEX



Speckled Sussex hens have a lovely variety of colorful feathers. They're friendly, curious, and calm.

They're also cold-hardy.

They are another breed that lays through the winter. Expect 4 brown eggs per week from this one.

Below are some of my favorites, along with the top five favorites from a City Girl Farming readers poll.

MY PERSONAL FAVORITES

Americana/Easter Egger	California Gray
Australorp	Cochin
Barnevelders	Maran
Barred Rock	Turken
Buff Orpington	White Delaware
Buckeye	

CITY GIRL FARMING READERS TOP FIVE:

(in order of popularity)

1. Buff Orpington
2. Easter Egger/Americana
3. Silkie
4. Barred Rock
5. Cochin

The following page gives you a printable list of some of the best overall backyard breeds, along with personality and egg colors that you can take with you to the feed store to help you decide which you'd like to add to your flock.

You might need to be flexible. Not every chick you want will be at the feed store at the same time. Decide on your 'hope-fors' along with some runners-up. You'll have time throughout the years to gather other breeds along the way even if you aren't able to get all on your favorites list the first time.

And who knows? Maybe those breeds WILL end up being your favorites afterall!





BACKYARD CHICKEN BREEDS QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE



BREED	EGGS	PERSONALITY
Australorp	Light brown eggs	Great beginner chicken--sweet, hardy, good layer, friendly
Barnevelder	Dark brown eggs	Easy going, don't mind confinement, gentle
Barred Rock	Light brown eggs	Sweet, friendly docile, quiet, a very easy going temperament
Black Copper Maran	Very dark brown eggs	Gentle, quiet, don't need a lot of space, beautiful dark eggs
Buff Orpington	Light brown eggs	Sweet, docile, good with kids, likes human attention, good mothers
Buckeye	Brown eggs	Docile and calm, peaceful. Friendly and good with children
Cochin	Brown eggs	Mellow, super sweet, great with kids, more of a 'pet', great mom and foster mom
Delaware	Large brown eggs	Calm, friendly, curious, smart.
Easter Egger/ Americana	Blue, olive, pink-ish or white eggs (they lay one color of any of these)	Friendly, curious, gentle, great with kids. Popular because of their colorful eggs and friendly personality.
Red Star	Large brown eggs	Docile, lays throughout the winter months. The best layer!
Silkie	Small cream eggs	Friendly, small breed, docile, super fluffy, good pet bird.
Speckled Sussex	Brown eggs	Calm, curious, friendly. Lays throughout the winter months.

Best Egg Layers	Most Friendly	Unique Egg Colors
Australorp Barred Rock Red Star	Australorp Barred Rock Buckeye Buff Orpington Cochin Easter Egger/Americana Silkie	Barnevelder Easter Egger/ Americana Maran



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Raising chickens is so much fun! Don't worry that you don't know everything at once. You'll learn as you go along. Before you know it, you'll be a pro.

I'd like to invite you to use the **City Girl Farming Website** for a chicken resource. You'll find over 12 years worth of blog posts and content there to help you out on your chicken journey.

Also, please come join the online community:



Spreading happiness one backyard flock at a time,



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