

Chickens Working as Clucking Civic Employees

Saving BIG TIME Tax Payer Dollars!

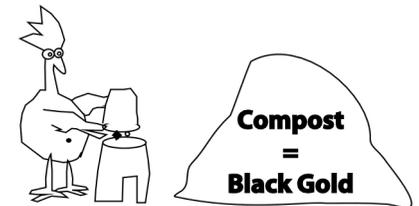


There are many warm-feathery reasons to keep family flocks, but the most economic and politically compelling reason is to employ chickens to bio-recycle kitchen, garden and yard “waste”. A policy (and goal) of Rockbridge County is to ultimately achieve a “zero-waste” trash stream. In a zero-waste system there isn’t any waste. Everything becomes “residuals” that can be recycled to one form or another. Everything has value and is transformed into something else useful. Household food and yard residuals can be bio-recycled and transformed into compost, garden and top soil.

Every single leftover piece of pizza, stale bread, moldy cheese, hamburgers, hotdogs, old potato chips, popcorn, food cleaned out from the refrigerator that has “gone by”, and even that old mincemeat cake from last Christmas, could be bio-recycled — or composted — employing family flocks.

Here’s how it works. A chicken eats about 8 pounds of food every month. That’s almost 100 pounds of food each year per chicken. Some of this “chicken feed” can come from your kitchen and yard instead of a store-bought bag. “Big deal” you think. “That’s not so much.” But what if only 100 households had 6 chickens. That would have the potential to bio-recycle around 60,000 pounds (30 tons) of food residuals. $(6 \text{ chickens})(100 \text{ pounds/year})(100 \text{ households}) = 60,000 \text{ pounds}$.

And it gets better. Use the chicken manure (high in nitrogen) to compost grass clippings, fallen leaves and garden waste (high in carbon) and you have the formula to make compost. Compost builds garden soils which in turn can grow vegetables which can feed people. The amount of yard waste, combined with the food residuals totals tons and tons of biomass that can easily bio-recycled in backyards. This is a green, no cost, low tech approach trash management and the solid waste management stream.



Keeping chickens is not for everyone; and it shouldn’t be. A general rule of thumb is that about 5% to 10% of a households might be interested in keeping a family flock.

Here’s the bottom line. Just by changing a few lines of code to allow — and even encourage — residents to keep family flocks and do composting, can result in a significant amount of biomass “waste” to be diverted from the trash collection stream and kept out of landfills.

Many cities in Europe are using this strategy effectively. One is the city of Diest in Flanders, Belgium. They officially employ chickens to reduce their trash management budget by purchasing and giving laying hens to residents. That’s right, city officials are employing chickens as an economical solution to their costly problem of trash management. And they are saving significant amounts tax payer dollars. From the city manager’s point of view, the chickens’ production of eggs, compost (topsoil), and fertilizer are simply spin-off added benefits to residents. These poultry produced benefits are to you, your yard and garden, your community and our environment. Chickens are truly pets with benefits.

There is more detailed information about employing clucking civic chicken workers in: *City Chicks: Keeping Micro-flocks of Chickens as Garden Helpers, Compost Creators, Bio-recyclers and Local Food Suppliers*.

May the flock be with YOU! 09— Patricia Foreman

