

HOW TO BUILD AN URBAN CHICKEN COOP

1. Locate an abandoned shopping cart:

Abandoned shopping carts have become ubiquitous detritus in the urban realm; littering underused parking lots, streets, and even fragile urban ecosystems. While they vary widely in both measurements and capacity, most carts share the same basic DNA in their fundamental components and shape. This standardization allows for the carts to become an adaptable modular unit for chicken coop construction; one available to any person of any means, in any city in the U.S.

With very little effort, shopping carts readily lend themselves to pen construction. Their modular form can scale up to accommodate a growing flock, or be rearranged to fit a wide variety of spaces. Their sturdy mesh sides provide protection from predators, plentiful ventilation, and positive drainage when the unit is hosed down.

2. Find a piece of metal to deck it out:

With the use of a few zip ties, and a large sheet of scrap metal, any sort of roof shape can be attached to the shopping cart chassis. While 3' by 8' sections of corrugated metal are common freebies in the urban environment, any material or large sheet shape can be used. Bendy plastic, rigid foam, or tough plywood can also form this roof plane. This sheet material can be fixed to the sides of the cart using zip ties, a rope, or even rivets.

Because found sheet materials differ widely and the sizes of those pieces will typically be different, a consistent roof form is not an option. Instead, each chicken coop will have a different roofline, ranging from curved to creased, swooping and flat. Ideally, the roof will arch upwards in at least one direction to shed water and to provide elevated roosting areas for the resident chickens.

3. Insert shelves and doors:

The front plane of the shopping cart detaches easily (it is hinged to allow multiple carts to nest), and this provides a good access point for feeding the chickens and harvesting the eggs. This plane can also be flipped down to meet the ground, allowing the chickens to move in and out of their coop at will.

Stacked boxes or mounted shelves on the interior create laying areas, feeding areas and also a lofted roosting space. Straw, newspapers, or towels along the bottom of the basket can be added to make the chickens more comfortable. The interior of the cart can support up to four chickens at any one time, with a raised roof.

4. Buy a chicken from a farmer

Chickens are friendly animals, requiring little maintenance and attention aside from daily feeding. They enjoy eating scraps, picking through compost, and pecking in the dirt for bugs. While most hens should be released into a run during the day and only spend their nights in the cart, their droppings would collect on the ground under the cart, forming a diurnal chicken tractor.

Because hens lay nearly one egg per day, and their eggs are a great affordable source of protein, they are valuable additions to households and cities. This investment of \$1.50 per bird and

ongoing feeding with free scraps could produce more than 400 eggs over the course of one bird's lifetime. After that, the same chicken can realize further value as a source of meat.

5. Put your chicken in the shopping cart.

Shopping carts have long been a symbol of homeless mobility, but this form lacks positive economic associations. With an investment of as little as \$1.50, any individual will be able to start an egg-producing venture. Moreover, the resurrection of once-deserted shopping carts into a productive urban asset has the potential to scale up across regions and socio-economic groups; revitalize food security at every level.