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# Are backyard chickens right for you?

Raising backyard chickens has been a growing phenomenon for several years. Many cities have passed laws legalizing backyard chickens, encouraging many to raise chickens as a rewarding hobby.

One of the biggest benefits to raising backyard chickens is that their eggs are fresher and often tastier than store-bought varieties. Hens can lay one egg per day. Multiply that egg per hen, and breakfast is always available.

Another benefit to chickens is they produce a natural fertilizer that can be used in gardens. "The Old Farmer's Almanac" says chicken manure can be composted, aged and eventually added to the garden. In about six months, a person will accumulate about one cubic foot of manure per chicken. Egg shells and other compostable material can be added to create an even richer formula.

Chickens also can help control bugs around the yard, offers the experts at Tractor Supply Company.

Before investing in backyard chickens, people should determine if chickens will fit with their lifestyle. Costs and care are a big consideration.

Each chick will cost anywhere between \$3 to \$5 a bird. Then there's feed to consider. The most expensive item will likely be the coop. The ens are a sound investment.

experts at The Happy Chicken Coop, a resource for raising chickens and starting coops, says handy men and women can build homemade coops, but ready-made ones will cost a few hundred dollars. The coop will need to offer around four square feet of space per chicken (or what's recommended for the breed).

Despite being seemingly independent birds, chickens need people to be active caregivers. They require feed and water daily. The chickens will need a caregiver while you vacation. People who are frequently away from home should reconsider chickens.

Chickens also are prone to worms, parasites and lice. They need to have rear feathers trimmed to stay clean and sanitary, and they will require an area where they can "dust" and self-groom. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises not to cuddle and kiss chickens like pets because they can carry salmonella. Not every coop is completely varmintproof, and some chickens may succumb to predators. Squeamish or sentimental folks may find chickens aren't the right fit.

Chickens require commitment and care that many people can provide. It is essential to do one's homework to ensure that backyard chickens are a sound investment.







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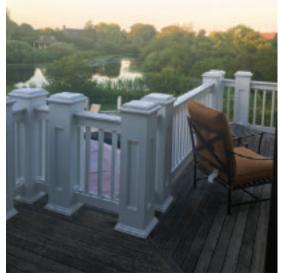
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# Emerging deck trends



Custom-built decks can expand usable outdoor entertaining spaces. Decks can surround pools and create outdoor patio areas that make it easy to establish multitiered living spaces, improving the functionality of outdoor areas. Certain deck trends have

emerged as industry experts' top picks for the upcoming remodeling and renovation season. For those thinking of revamping an existing deck, or building an entirely new one, these trends are on point.

• Established perimeters: "Picture framing" is not a new trend, but one that has taken greater hold in recent years. The term refers to aesthetically appealing designs that conceal the ends of deck boards for a clean finish. Some designs feature contrasting material colors on the ends for even more impact. This helps create refined perimeters for a polished look. • Roof-top decking: Urban areas also can benefit from decking to create usable outdoor spaces. In fact, many new condominium and townhouse communities are incorporating roof-top decks into their designs, particularly in communities with water views or other impressive vistas. HGTV experts suggest roof-top decks feature light-colored materials and fixtures to help keep the area cool even in direct sunlight.

• Distressed hardwood: Builder and Developer, a management resource for professional homebuilders, says that the trend for using distressed hardwoods at home has migrated outside. Some decking manufacturers have recently introduced low-maintenance composite deck boards that mimic the look and feel of distressed, rustic hardwood flooring. This weathered appearance gives the look of age without the upkeep of real aged wood.

• Wooden walkways: Decking can be the more traditional design people envision with a patio table or outdoor furniture. But it also can consist of wooden

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walkways or a low-laying patio to accentuate the yard.

• Mixed materials: Homeowners may be inspired by commercial eateries, breweries and urban markets in their exterior design choices. Decks featuring composite materials and aluminum railings blend sophistication, urban appeal and comfort.

• **Personal touches:** Homeowners can customize their decks with personal touches. It's not unheard of to wrap columns in stone or glass tiles for more impact. And a vast array of decking colors now enables fun interpretations for outdoor areas.

• Fire pit conversation area: Many decks can incorporate water or fire elements for visual appeal. Gas-fueled fire elements can expand the functionality of decks beyond the warm seasons, or make enjoying them practical on nights when the temperature plummets.

Decks are reimagined in many different ways with continually evolving trends.

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