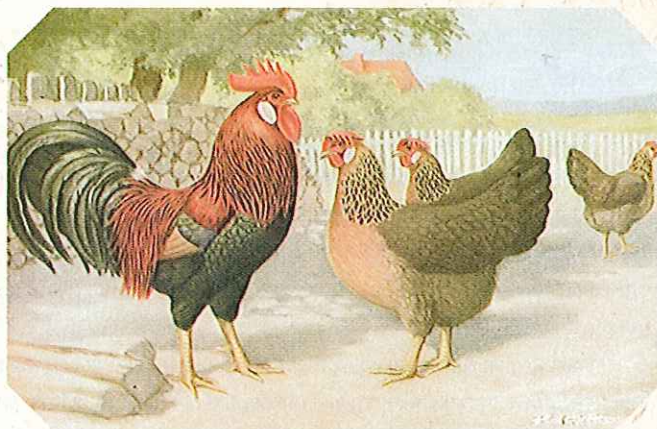


# Fowlplay

Increasing numbers of people are tending small flocks of fancy breeds of chickens in cities, suburbs and other small spaces.



**P**am and Randy Simmons from Turpin Farms have caught on to the fancy poultry trend. They help raise sunflowers and other cut flowers, sod, annuals and perennials, herbs and water plants. But they also raise chickens as pets—right in the heart of Cincinnati.

“We have a number of fancy chickens around,” explains Randy. “They wander around the greenhouse when people are buying plants.”

Chickens work well in gardens, according to Pam. “They eat insects, but not the plants.” Homeowners could have a few chickens to get the eggs, Pam suggests. “Our fancy chickens lay eggs with dark yolks that are really yummy to cook with!”

But chickens as pets? “They are loving in their own way. They hang out with you and talk to you. We had one that was just like a dog or a cat. It would come around right at lunch time every day and beg to be fed,” says Pam.

“People aren’t raising chickens solely for meat or egg production any more,” agrees Murray McMurray of McMurray Hatchery, a mail-order source for baby chicks. The hatchery sends more of its 109 varieties of fancy chicks to zip codes in urban areas, suburbs and country estates than just to farms.

This trend shows that people are raising the birds as a hobby, much like they raised llamas and emus in the past. The bantams, or miniature chickens, are especially popular.

Like the Sumatra. This graceful and beautiful bird has lustrous greenish-black plumage, a small comb and wattles. “These are the ones

that have very long tail feathers,” says Pam.

The Black Frizzle Cochin is truly unique. Unlike all other chickens, the feathers on the frizzle curve outward and forward giving it the appearance of having walked through a windstorm backwards. They come in red, black and white colors.

White Polish chickens are sometimes called “Snowballs,” and they really do look like them with their snow-white crests and pure white rounded bodies.

Interested?

The Exotic Poultry exhibit at the Cincinnati Flower Show will demonstrate how chickens of all sizes, shapes and colors can enhance the garden. “We plan to use really cool-looking chickens,” promises Pam.

“Our display will feature exotic chickens and poultry with annual and perennial plants. The plants will complement the colors and textures of the chickens,” explains Randy. For example, silver mound Artemisia shows off black and white chickens, like the White Crested Black Polish. Their solid black body with a bright white “top hat” of feathers makes these little bantams a favorite.

Pam adds, “We don’t need to use all flowering plants, but rather plants with interesting foliage. The chickens are the flowers!”

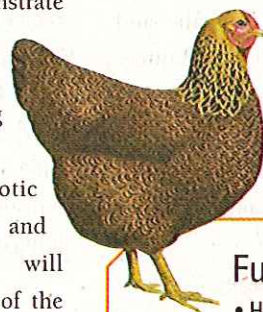
Not all of the fancy fowl at the show will be chickens. You may also see some dignified

African Geese. Or some Red Golden Pheasants.

The display should be a treat for chicken enthusiasts, and a revelation for those who are unaware of the trend. You may decide to raise a few exotic chickens for the sheer enjoyment of these striking and amazing animals. **Design**

## Sources:

McMurray Hatchery, (800) 456-3280.  
www.mcmurrayhatchery.com. / Turpin Farms,  
(513) 561-2621. www.turpinfarms.com.



## Fun Fowl Facts

- Hens with white ear lobes usually lay white eggs and hens with red ear lobes usually lay brown eggs.
- Araucana chickens lay blue-green eggs. They are called the “Easter Egg Chicken.”
- A good way to tell if an egg is fresh is to put it in cold water. A fresh egg contains little air so it will sink.
- A chicken can live between 10-15 years although there have been instances where they have lived longer.