

Several years ago, our neighbors' chickens paid us a visit. We were used to hearing their roosters crow at any given hour of the day, but when I could hear crowing loud and clear through closed windows, it got my attention. I walked outside and there they were, about six of them, scratching and pecking their way through my shade garden.

Now anyone who has chickens knows that they can wreak havoc in a garden, if they're left unattended. I was not about to let that happen, but they're fun to watch, so that's what I did while they held court in the coral bells.

Eventually, they strutted themselves back home, but not before I'd been smitten and decided I wanted a few of my own. Having your own chickens was beginning to make a comeback among home gardeners and I wanted to jump on that bandwagon. There was just one problem. Well, two. We didn't have a chicken coop and my husband didn't share my desire to have chickens.

I pleaded my case to him, explaining that they really are easy to care for and I would do it all anyway and eggs from your own chickens taste better and are more nutritious and they're just so gosh darn cute, aren't they? I knew I had to convince him of all that before I even broached the subject of making a chicken coop.

He was having none of it. NO CHICKENS, he said. Sigh.

I let it go for several months, but I'm sure he knew he'd not heard the last of it. After all, we'd been married for over 30 years and if he'd paid any attention at all, he knew I wasn't going to go down that easily. So after more than three years of singing the praises of owning your own chickens, he relented. I bought the plans for the "Daisy" coop, and I would have my chickens. Yay!

We worked on the coop together because I kind of felt like I'd better help since this whole chicken thing was my idea in the first place. By this time, Chick Days were nearly over at the farm supply store, so we had to get our chicks before the coop was ready. I bought eight chicks

– three Buff Orpingtons and five Silver Laced Wyandottes – even though I really only wanted five total. I figured we might lose a chick or two, or maybe one might end up being a rooster. I didn't want a rooster.

The chicks stayed in the greenhouse until the coop was ready and that was a lesson in just how messy chickens can be when they aren't in the right environment. But they eventually went to the finished coop and we got things cleaned up with the help of a jackhammer and a pressure washer. Just kidding. Sort of.

Several months went by and then the day after my birthday, I was walking by the chicken run and did a double-take. There, laying right out in front of God and everybody, was an egg. Our first egg! Happy birthday to meeee! We had no clue as to which one of them laid it – Hazel, Layla, Goldie, Miss Landers, Pippa, Patty, Bianca or Violet. Every single one of them was strutting around, all like, “Look at ME. I laid that big boy.”

In the next few weeks, they all began laying and that was when my husband decided that yes, it was an okay thing that we got chickens. He liked them so much that he took a lawn chair, sat it right outside the run, and watched them. The cats watched too. Chicken TV.

All was well until February, when I was in Seattle and got word that Miss Landers had passed away, with no warning. It may have been an impacted egg, but we weren't going to do a chicken autopsy to find out. It happened again last week. This time it was Hazel and it was the same scenario. So now we're down to six. That still gives us four or five eggs a day and enough chicken manure to give our compost a nutritious boost.

Read more at Kylee's blog, Our Little Acre, at www.ourlittleacre.com and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OurLittleAcre. Contact her at PauldingProgressGardener@gmail.com.