

Local Notes on Chicken Feed (Tom Shelley, Spring 2011)

Stuff I have researched and would like to grow as chicken feed:

Amaranth — Good protein and one of the most recommended feed supplements.

Camelina (sativa) — A very old oil seed/protein crop. Easy to grow.

Comfrey — One of the very best perennials for chickens.

Corn — Easy to grow.

Cow peas — Another good protein source.

Duckweed — A pond can grow one of the most valuable crops of all, in season. It is grown for chicken feed all over the world. Easy to harvest and 52% protein. See the TCLocal article "[Visioning County Food Production, Part 6](#)" for more about duckweed in sustainable food production.

Fat Hen — *Chenopodium album*. The colloquial name tells it all.

Flax — Great source of protein and oil.

Jerusalem artichokes — The leaves are a really great chicken feed. And it's a hardy perennial.

Purslane — A common weed, but agricultural cultivars are much more productive. Lots of protein.

Siberian pea shrub — This is one of the best chicken feeds around. The plants can make a dense, shrubby hedgerow.

Sugar beets — A great source of protein and carbohydrates. May store in a dry root cellar.

Sunflowers (for seeds; Peredovik is high oil type, but a complementary higher protein type would be good as well) — For a methionine source. If soy bean meal or another methionine source is not used, then sunflowers are a really good substitute.

Swiss chard (silver beet) — People food, but chickens love it as well. Would be a great cold frame/greenhouse crop in the winter. I have the capability of making many square feet of cold frames. Just need a little time.....

Some things that could be collected all year round:

Milk — If you know a farmer who has excess milk that you can buy cheaply (probably not!) this would be great. Chickens love milk. Making milk into yogurt (easy to do) is even better for chickens.

Day old or malformed bread — Just like eating wheat or other grains. Maybe make an informal agreement with a local baker to exchange occasional eggs for a supply of stale bread. Just like feeding the pigeons, only different.

Things that could be collected in the Fall:

Apples — Can be root cellared for the winter.

Squash and pumpkins — Chickens like the seeds, and they are often in great surplus. What is too spoiled for human consumption can go in the compost, minus the seeds.

Other veggies — In and out of season. Make friends with local vendors and take spoiled produce. Chickens will eat a bunch, especially greens and seeded things. Black soldier fly larva will eat almost any old, rotting veggies, so the more we can get, the more they will grow!

Hay — Alfalfa, clover, whatever. There are several sources of organic alfalfa in the Ithaca area.