

# The Garden Coop



chicken coop construction plan

METRIC VERSION

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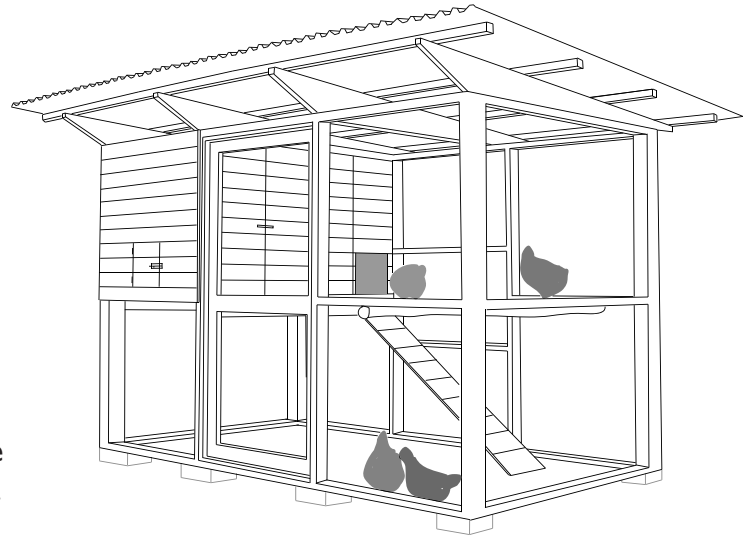
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# overview and precautions

THE GARDEN COOP makes for a comfortable, attractive home for up to eight hens. The polycarbonate (translucent) roof adds a lot both to the form and the function of the coop, providing light, ventilation, security, and cover. It is set atop what is basically a box within a box. The outer box defines the enclosed hen yard; the inner box, the henhouse. The yard and henhouse are made of a two-by-four (90 x 38 mm) lumber (timber) frame that rests on cinderblock piers set partially in the ground. The piers provide a stable, level foundation and elevate the wooden frame away from the moisture of the ground.



The frame is completely enclosed with a mix of wood siding and 13 x 13 mm hardware cloth on all sides and at the top, and the hardware cloth is buried 30-45 cm into the ground on all sides. This prevents rodents and predators from easily digging in, and helps anchor the structure. The floor of the hen yard is the ground, so the chickens can scratch in earth and straw. Roosts can be hung at various heights in the yard as well as in the henhouse. The hens access the henhouse from a ladder below. There are two nesting boxes up there, and room for more, if you felt like you needed them. The tall latched door to the yard makes it easy for you to get in and out for care and cleaning. A feeder and waterer can be hung from beneath the henhouse. For egg collection, there is a latched egg door to the outside that opens into both nesting boxes.

Those are the basics of The Garden Coop. It's a flexible design, and you'll no doubt enjoy thinking of ways to modify it to fit into your own setting and routines. Now some important notes and precautions...

## ABOUT THE METRIC VERSION

All measurements are in millimeters (mm) unless otherwise noted. In most cases, I have converted directly from imperial units. Lumber and hardware dimensions vary around the world, so please measure what you have and adjust from the plan as needed.

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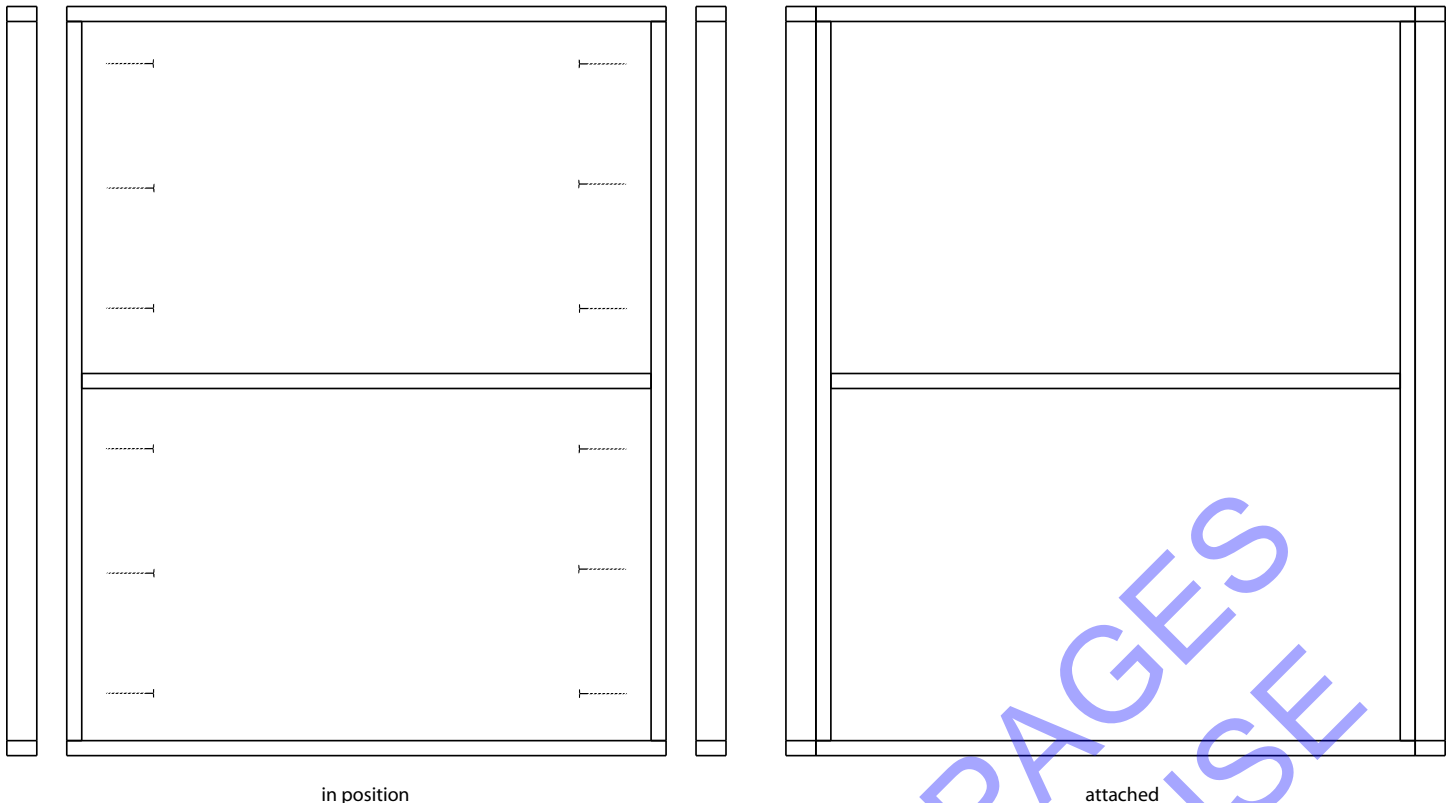
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Make sure to follow all manufacturers' instructions when using tools, materials, or equipment — and use the appropriate protective devices when building, such as work gloves, eye and ear protection, boots, etc. Know what you can handle physically as well, and work within your limits...

**Build safe and have fun!**

# framing the walls (continued)

NOW IS A GOOD TIME to apply the environmentally/wildlife-friendly paint, wood treatment, or sealer of your choice to the frame elements to protect them from the weather (see Appendix). Remember to sand the “mill glaze” off of new lumber so that it accepts the paint/treatment/sealer (use 60- or 80-grit sandpaper). Note: once you’ve framed up the door, roof support, and siding, paint/treat/seal those areas too.



in position

attached

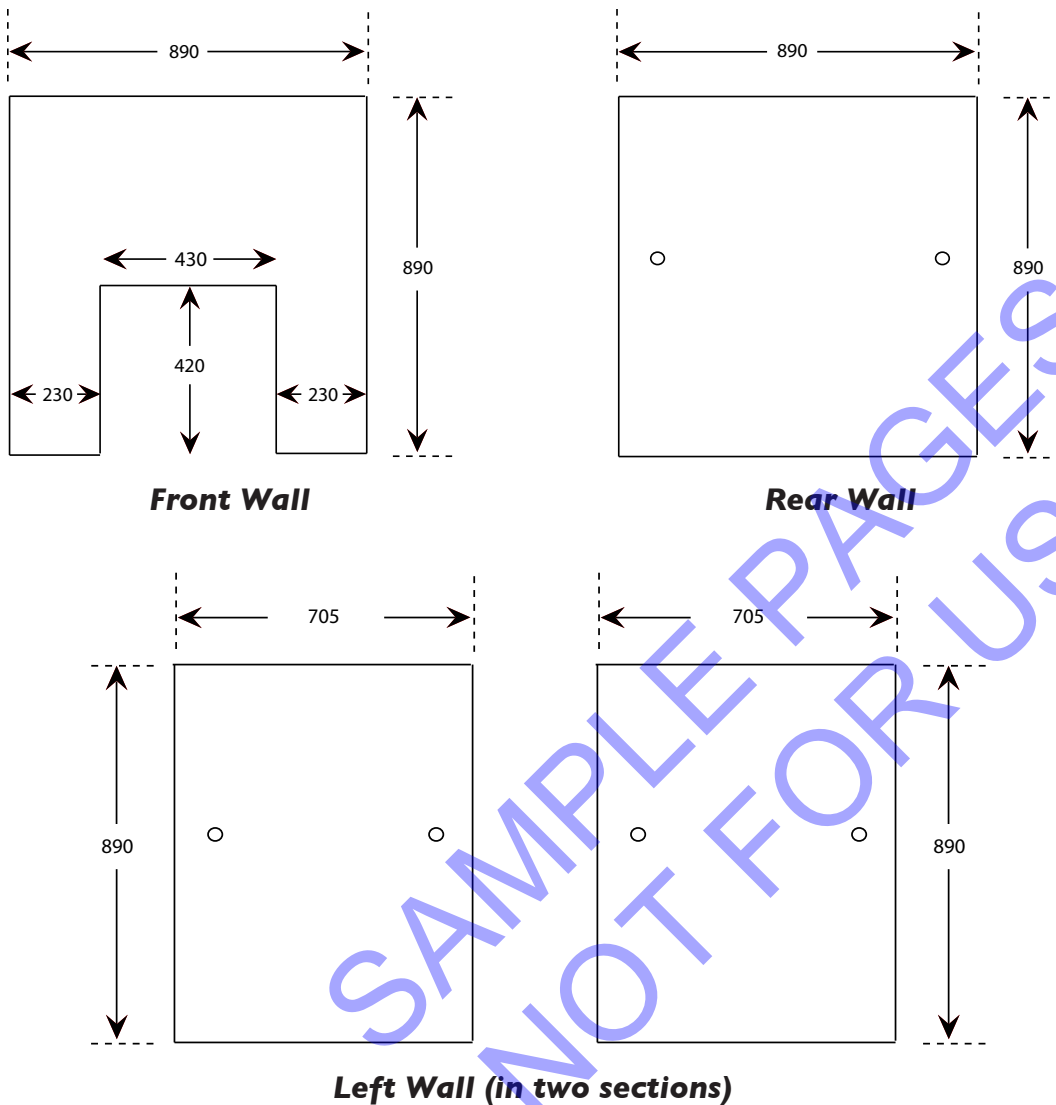
## **View from Right Side**

- Move the finished frame elements to the final assembly area. With some help, you’ll assemble the walls together, and the coop frame will take shape.
- Use caution in standing the front and right walls up vertically. Align them properly, then screw them together at the corner studs using 75 mm screws. Do the same with the rear wall, then the left wall.
- You’re basically sandwiching the side walls between the front and rear walls. Use three screws above center, and three below. Make sure the pieces fit flush.

# henhouse walls and floor (continued)

## “FLOATING” INTERIOR WALLS

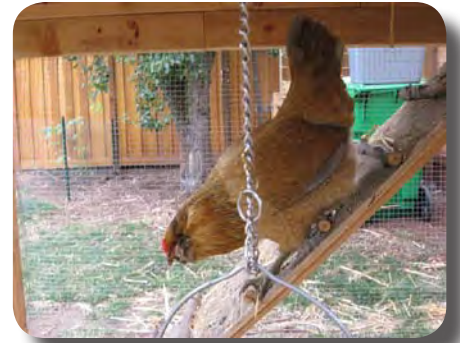
- **STEP ONE:** From inside your henhouse, caulk the gaps in the siding to prevent cold air and moisture from getting in. If you do this, you also want to add these floating interior walls. They will prevent your chickens from pecking at the caulk in the siding, block drafts, and help insulate. If you're using sheet siding instead or otherwise not using caulk, then these wall panels are optional. They do not permanently attach to the frame and are meant to be removable, either for cleaning or for adding rigid insulation as desired (see Step Three).
- **STEPTWO:** Measure and cut plywood according to the diagrams below. Where shown, drill 25 mm finger holes in the boards (rear and left walls) to help you hold them during positioning.



# ladder and perches

## LADDER

- **STEP ONE:** Cut a piece of plywood 290 mm wide by about 1675 mm long (check for an exact measurement). You want to be able to insert the top end 6-10 mm into the hole in the bottom of the henhouse floor and have the bottom end rest on the ground without slipping. Alternatively, you can use a hinge to attach the top end to the bottom of the henhouse floor.
- **STEPTWO (optional):** If you have leftover hardware cloth, you might attach a piece between the board and the rungs to give your birds a little extra traction in the spaces between the rungs. Make sure it is pressed flat against the board so that their toes don't get snagged.
- **STEP THREE:** I recommend using branches to make the rungs of the ladder and the perches instead of smooth dowels or poles. The natural unevenness of the branch makes it easier for the hens to grab with their feet. Find a branch that's about 20 mm in diameter, and cut it into several 290 mm lengths (same width as the ladder board). Using small screws, attach these to the top of the ladder board every 150 mm.



## PERCHES



- **STEP ONE:** Find a long branch that's about 70 mm in diameter (for full-sized chickens, smaller for young birds and bantam hens). Attach it with long screws to the horizontal boards that are halfway up the side of the enclosed yard.
- **STEPTWO:** Also put a perch inside the henhouse, leaving enough clearance above and below for the birds to move about. Attach a couple of short two-by-four blocks to the "floating" inside walls, then attach the perch to top of those blocks.

## appendix (continued)

### Tips for cutting and attaching hardware cloth

- Use leather or rubber coated gloves to protect your hands from abrasion.
- Use a decent pair of wire snips that can handle 19-gauge wire (.9 mm) or heavier.
- After you make a cut that leaves a smooth edge on your cut piece, there will be a row of sharp tabs left on the edge of the roll. Cut these tabs off before doing anything else — but don't cut them off at the next wire, or they'll fall loose to the ground. Go another wire over (see picture at right). Then when you cut, you'll be removing a vertical wire with tabs attached on each side. It's much easier to roll that piece up and dispose of it.
- The most secure way to attach the galvanized poultry net staples is to nail them across the wire at a weld, so they actually catch the mesh going in two directions. Avoid trying to hammer them in at knots in the wood, as this will likely just deform the staple. You'll get a feel for the particular staples you buy. Some are thicker and really need to be pounded in. Others are thinner/smooth and go in easier, though you may have to be more careful with your hammering technique so that they don't get bent out of shape.



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