



STEVE MAXWELL

HOMESTEADING



When it comes to food, people eventually make their way back to basics. Heritage vegetables, free-range meats, artisanal cheeses – they're all examples of what I mean. No matter how modern and convenient our food system has become, it has a hard time delivering a close enough connection to the land for many of us. This dynamic is probably why backyard chicken husbandry is on the rise, and of course this means an interest in backyard chicken houses of the kind you've got with these plans.

We've kept chickens on our Manitoulin Island home since 2002, and there's one housing idea that we keep coming back to: modularity. A handful of smaller, semi-portable coops is better than one large, permanently anchored house. This is especially true when you're dealing with a city or suburban backyard. Permanent coops don't make much sense in places like these, yet the serious drawbacks aren't obvious until it's too late. That's why people keep building the wrong kind of chicken house, only to have to stick to it because they've invested so much in the structure.

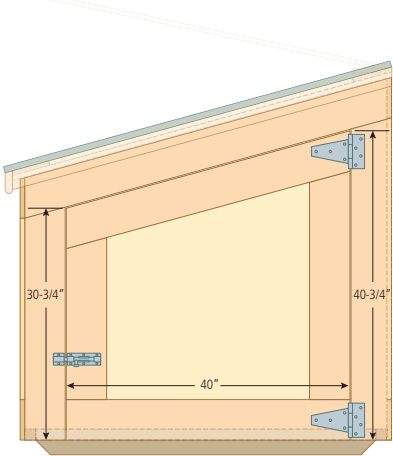
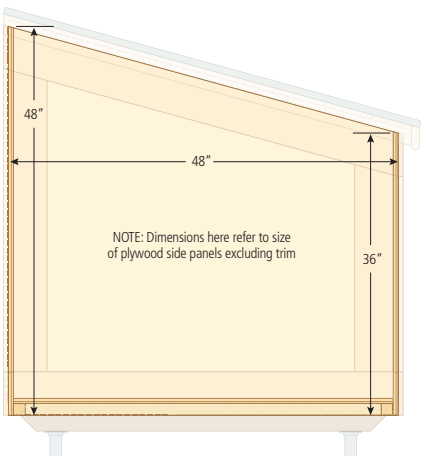
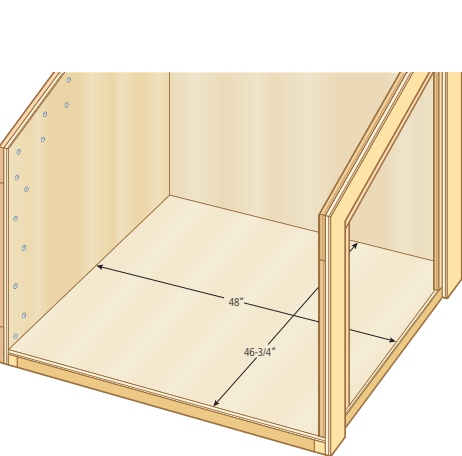
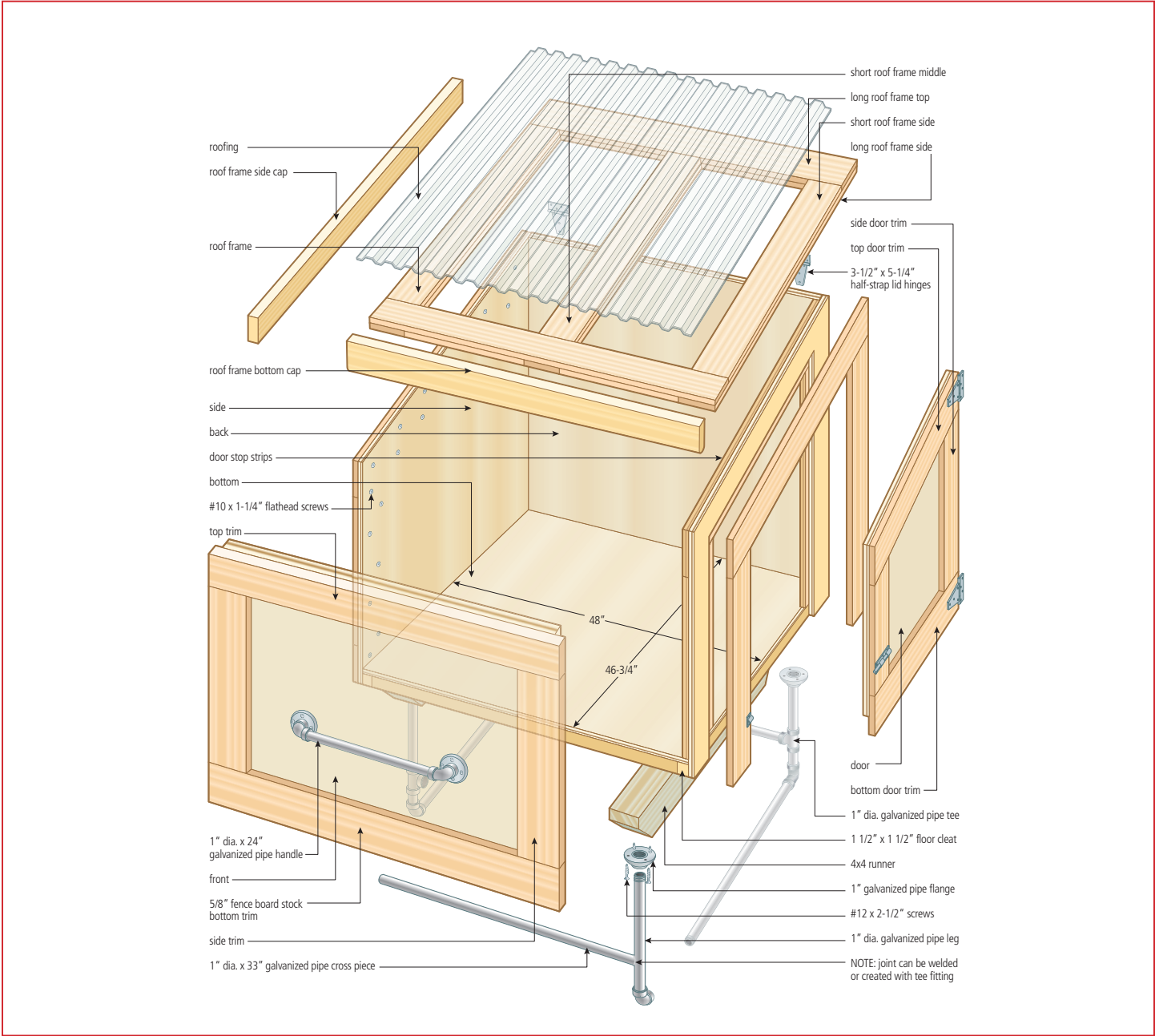
The modular coop in these plans is solid and surprisingly warm in winter because of the clear, solar roof, yet easily ventilated in summer because the roof hinges up. Simple to build from 5/8"-thick exterior grade plywood, this design can be moved to new locations when needed. Individual modules can be pulled out of production for a time to break pest cycles, and they're easy to clean without standing in poop.

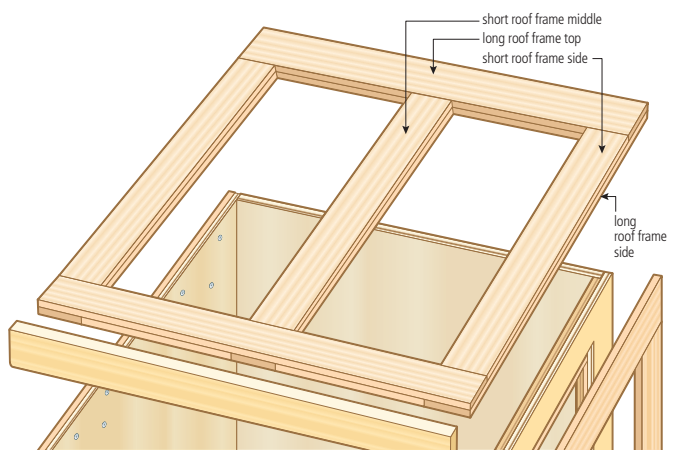
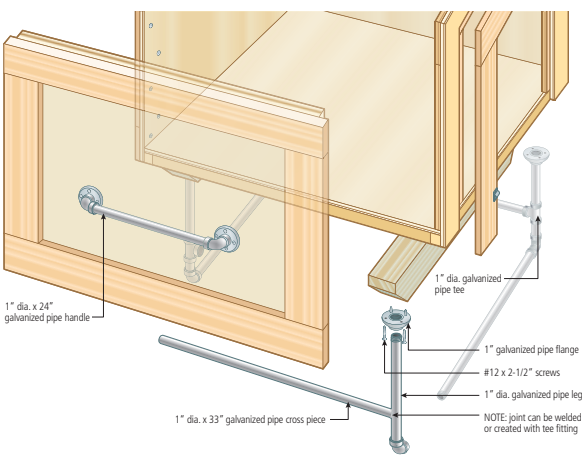
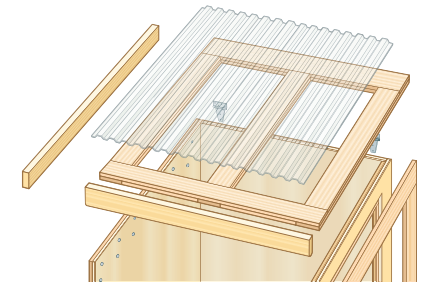
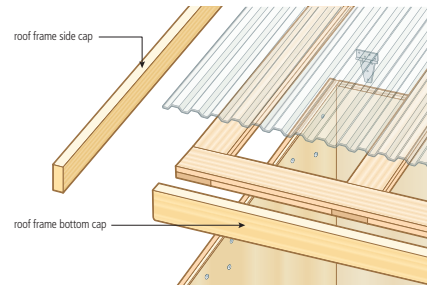
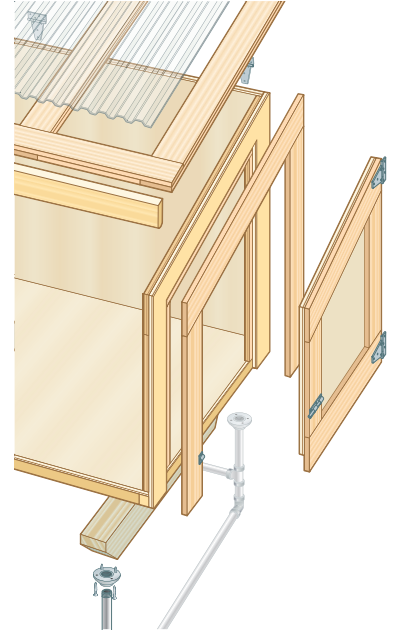
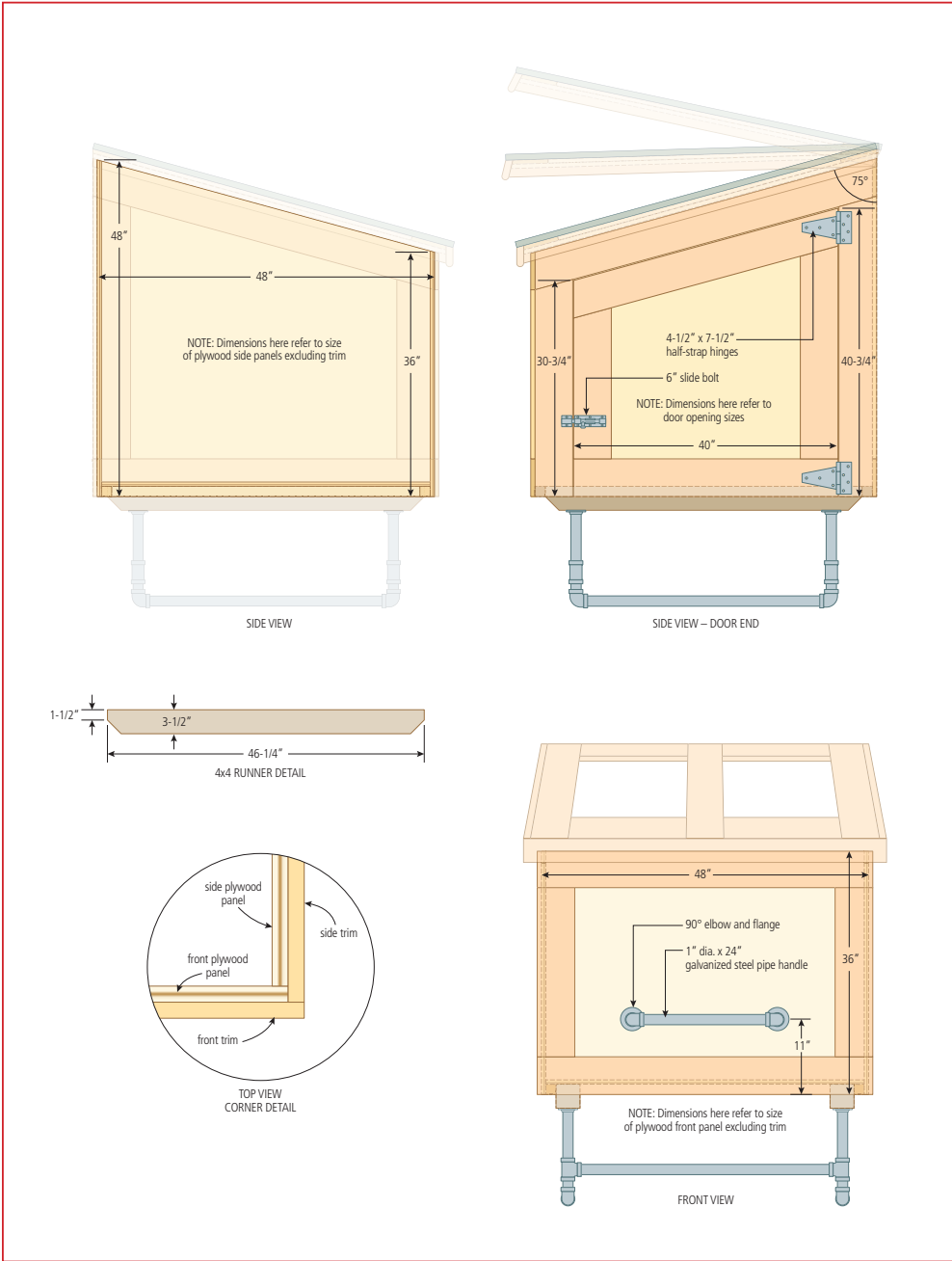
This coop design sits on legs that raise the structure off the ground, keeping the wood of the coop well and truly dry and away from the soil. Nothing can rot because of soil contact, as it often does with other coops. Raising the height of a chicken house like this also makes it perfect for winter use in areas that get snow. Although this design looks fancy, nothing this substantial could be easier to build.

The opportunity to collect eggs without opening the chicken door is another advantage of the hinged roof. Simply swivel the top upwards, reach down into whatever nesting box you're using, then retrieve the eggs. You can also replenish feed and water this way, too.

Although hens can get in and out of a very small door, having a large door makes it easier to move feed and water in from the side if you want, and move out manure when it's time to clean the houses. In my design nearly one whole side swings outwards, with no lip above the floor level. Manure and bedding is easy to scrape out. If I was building these houses again, I'd put doors on opposite sides so I could position two houses side-by-side with the roofs sloping the same way. A couple of small doorway openings in the mating walls would turn the two houses into one larger one.

Modification and customizing are all part of the chicken house adventure. Apply your own ideas to this design and have some fun.





Materials Required for Each Chicken House

Part	Material	Size	Quantity
Bottom	exterior ply	5/8" x 46 3/4" x 48"	1
Edging strips	softwood	1 1/2" x 1 1/2" x 16"	1
Front	exterior ply	5/8" x 36" high x 48" wide	1
Back	exterior ply	5/8" x 48" x 48"	1
Sides	exterior ply	5/8" x 36" - 48" tapered x 48" **	2
Door stops	exterior ply	5/8" x 5" x 130"	cut from scraps
Short roof frame sides/middle	fence boards	5/8" x 4 1/2" x 43 1/2"	3
Long roof frame sides/middle	fence boards	5/8" x 4 1/2" x 52 1/2"	3
Long roof frame top/bottom	fence boards	5/8" x 4 1/2" x 51"	2
Short roof frame top/bottom	fence boards	5/8" x 4 1/2" x 18"	4
Roof frame side caps	softwood	1" x 2 3/4" x 53 1/4"	2
Roof frame bottom cap	fence boards	1" x 3 1/4" x 53"	1
Roofing panels	polycarbonate	55 1/2" x 26"	3
Runners	pressure-treated	3 1/2" x 3 1/2" x 46 1/4"	2
Handle	galvanized steel pipe	1" dia. x 24"	2
Handle elbows	galvanized steel	1" dia.	8
Handle flanges	galvanized steel	1" dia.	8
Leg uprights	galvanized steel	1" dia. x 12"	4
Leg base	galvanized steel	1" dia. x 33 1/2"	2
Leg cross pieces	galvanized steel	1" dia. x 38 1/2"	2
Door & edge trim	fence boards	5 1/4" x 96"	10
Door hinges	plated steel, half strap	4 1/2" x 7 1/2"	2
Door bolt	plated steel	6" long overall	1
Roof hinges	plated steel, half strap	3 1/2" x 5 1/4"	2

**Total length required. Cut and fit from scraps*

***See plans for details*

Of all the domestic livestock out there, chickens deliver more high-quality protein for the feed they eat than any other animal. You can't beat the efficiency of a chicken.

Lighting a chicken coop with a lamp keeps production high when days get shorter, but that doesn't mean birds won't benefit from a rest. Let egg production slow down a bit as nights get longer in the fall and you'll have healthier birds.



Steve Maxwell and his family live on a 90 acre rural island homestead. Their flock of hens lay about a dozen eggs a day, none of which last for long in the fridge. Visit Steve online at BaileyLineRoad.com