

Perennial Chicken Feed At The Organic Learning Center

By Sr. Glen

Below is a list of plants we feed our chickens. The number listed to the left side of the name of the plant is their preference rating. Those with 100 rating, the chickens love them will eat as much as we give them. Whereas those with a 20 rating will only eat them when they're hungry and don't eat much. I've listed the local common name followed by it's botanical name. Occasionally some plants have many variations and are very similar so the botanical name could be slightly off.

There is lots and lots of variation to all of these feeds. For one, chickens are somewhat similar to people in that all people don't like to eat the same thing. However, like people, chickens can be taught to eat new things. As strange as it may seem chickens, born in an incubator without a mother to teach them what to eat, very often, they will not eat worms. We have to teach ours to eat worms by mixing worms with a little bit of cornmeal. Kind of like parents do with children by mixing food they don't like with food they do like.

However, with the leaves listed below, we did **NOT** try to teach them to eat any of them. So it could be there are some leaves they would eat more of if we taught them. We tried cooking many of the leaves by boiling them. That didn't make them any more palatable. Another variable is age. The adult chickens will eat more variety than will the young chicks. Like some children, the young chicks are more picky eaters.

Secondly, we did most of this testing in the dry weather. It could be that some of the leaves the chickens didn't like, they would like them in the wet season when they are more succulent.

These leaves are not the only thing we feed our chickens. They get kitchen waste and waste from the garden, as well as free range eating whatever they find on the ground and in the manure piles and compost piles that we have available for them. There's also black soldier flies grown overhead they eat when they pupate. We have some video on that showing how we create the fly nests. We also give the chickens the waste from slaughtering animals as well as when animals die...plus mice, etc. we kill.

We grow a lot of papaya because we like to eat it and drink the juice and we can sell it. Therefore, we have a lot of papaya seeds and peelings, which is one of their favorite foods. They produce all year long and for a long time. We generally prefer the small fruit size varieties, because the smaller fruit sizes tend to have a disproportionately large amount of seeds. And the seeds being excellent chicken feed is the major reason we're growing them.

We plant noni trees near the chicken yard so they can be eaten when they fall to the ground as chickens free range. They are a great food source because the chickens enjoy the fruit and seeds and people don't eat them. Noni, commonly known as "vomit fruit" because of the smell of the fruit juice, bear fruit all year long with heavy yields.

Most of these plants are freely available because they grow wild. Most people don't know about them because they're not looking for them. Or, when they see them, they want to kill them because they are weeds. It took me more than 10 years to discover their availability. I am sure there are many more waiting for me to discover them.

100 **Moradillo** leaf & vine...Commelina diffusa
100 **Papaya** seeds and skins...Carica papaya
100 **Noni fruit**...Morinda citrifolia
80 **Silage** ...whole corn plant
70 **Malivar spinach** leaf...Baseella alba
60 **Verdolaga**...Purslane leaf...Portulaca oleracea
60 **Mexican Sunflower** leaf...Tithonia diversifolia
60 **Leucaena** leaf...Leucocephalla
60 **Chaya** leaf...Cnidoscolus aconitifolius
60 **Indio desnudo** leaf...Bursera simaruba
60 **Heart of plantain/banana trunk**
60 **Heart of plantain/banana flower**
60 **Noni** leaf...Morinda citrifolia
50 **Baby plantain/banana tree**
50 **Chile indio**...wild chile...leaf & fruit Capsicum Annuum
50 **Rami** leaf...Boehmeria nivea
50 **Pito** leaf...Erythrina berteroana
50 **Mulberry** leaf...Morus Alba
50 **Nacedero** leaf...Trichanthera gigantea
50 **Nopal cactus pads**...Opuntia
50 **Water spinach** leaf...Ipomoea aquatic
40 **Casava** leaf... Manihot esculenta
40 **Pigeon Pea** leaf... Cajanus cajan
40 **Moringa** leaf...Moringa oleifera
40 **Madriado** leaf...Gliricidia sepium
40 **Sweet potato** leaf...Ipomoea batatas
40 **Mombassa** leaf...Megathyrsus maximus cv. Mombasa
40 **Comfrey** leaf...Symphytum officinale
30 **Calliandra** leaf...Calliandra calothyrsus
30 **Tabaquillo** leaf... Verbesina Turbacensis
20 **Tatascan** leaf... Perymenium strigillosum
20 **Cablote** leaf... Guazuma ulmifolia Lam
20 **Guanacaste** leaf...Enterolobium cyclocarpum
20 **Lorel** leaf...Cordia alliodora
20 **Chachalaco** leaf... Cordia alba
20 **Guama** leaf...Inga edulis
20 **Lemon grass** leaf... Cymbopogon Citratus

