



THE BASICS OF KEEPING DUCKS.

Four ducks on a pond

Grass bank beyond,

A blue sky of spring,

White clouds on the wing.

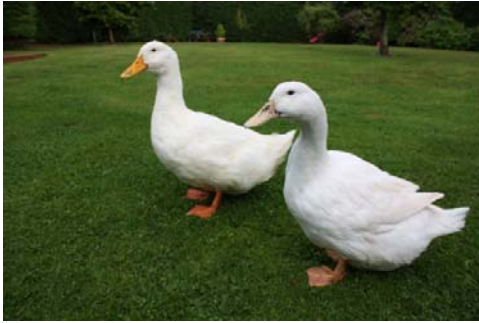
What a little thing

To remember for years,

William Allingham.

You really will remember your ducks for they are graceful, entertaining and peaceful, they are like mini swans in your garden, but you do have to manage them!

People are now keeping poultry more and more and sometimes when they are acquiring poultry they will come across ducklings also. They are so sweet they can be tempted to take them home but they do have different needs to hens. Choosing the right duck is important. Some of the smaller ducks such as the Call or Pekins are very talkative and also in turn attract more predators. Some people like the sound of ducks, but it can annoy neighbours. Drakes of all breeds have weaker voices.



Temperament:

Ducks are intelligent and friendly in general but can be rather shy. Some breeds are quieter than others but most have very lovable characteristics.

Basic Guidelines:

Protect your birds from predators. Ducks raised in small flocks seldom die from disease or exposure to weather, but quite a few are lost to predators. In most locations ducks should be housed in a building at night.

Supply a balanced diet in the right amounts. After predators improper feeding is the second most common cause of problems.

Provide a steady supply of drinking water.

They need their water changed regularly.

Suitable living conditions are essential. Keeping ducks in dry area when they are feeding or sleeping is recommended. But need to be locked at night. Do not disturb them more than necessary, ducks thrive on tranquility.

When catching them do not grab or carry them by their legs. The legs of ducks are easily hurt.

Housing.

Ducks need minimal housing, while they are very resistant to cold and wet weather, they must have access to dry wind proof housing and bedding. Housing also should provide safety from predators etc. Shavings can be used and straw makes a nice dry bed to lay eggs on. It is better to leave the ducks in for awhile in the mornings as this encourages the female to lay in the house. Ducks are not as reliable as hens where they lay their eggs, and I

have even found them in the paddle pool. Duck eggs have become very popular especially in cookery and are really tasty.

Ducks need access to water.

At the very least a large buckets so that they can preen, and submerge their heads right in. If not they can develop very sore and sticky eyes. Small paddling pools are perfect, but beware ducks are messy! It is very easy to get a garden waterlogged and muddy, so best to put pool on some hard



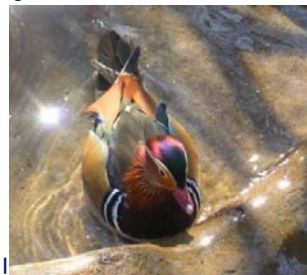
surrounding area.

Feeding

Duck like hens can be fed on a commercial pellet. Always make sure you provide a diet that is age and life-stage appropriate. For example ducklings need a ration formulated especially for baby waterfowl, while laying ducks need a feed to meet their special needs.

They love being out and foraging for themselves and are great insect and pest collectors! They enjoy corn but should be fed in small amounts as it can cause them to gain weight, and so lower egg production. Surplus eggs can be hard boiled and fed back to them. This is a complete feed and improves condition. Never feed raw eggs. Always ensure that they have plenty of room to feed at the feeder, as smaller ducks cannot get their proper ration if they are getting pushed away at feeding time.

There is no doubt that these shy and gentle birds can add grace and beauty and movement to a garden, but on the other hand if you are a keen



gardener you may want to give them their own area!



This is Winnie and Pooh with Their little helpers Lulu, Cilla, Dippy, Rosie, helping with the Christmas lights! Easy knowing they live in a veggie household!