

**Miniature Fainting Goats** are a cross between Nigerian dwarfs and Longhaired Fainting Goats. They stand up to 25-in. tall at the withers, and have calm and pleasant personalities.



## Miniature Silky Fainting Goats

If you're looking for some "pasture candy," check out Miniature Silky fainting goats. They have the kind of long, silky hair you see on shampoo commercials. According to Renee Orr, who developed the breed, they have calm, pleasant personalities.

"I had Nigerian dwarfs and Frank Baylis at Bayside Kennel and Farm had longhaired fainting goats, but they were bigger than what we wanted. We had this crazy idea to mix them with the Nigerian dwarfs to add some color and to reduce the size," explains the Lignum, Va., breeder.

That was about 20 years ago, and now there are goats in a variety of colors and color combinations with eyes in all colors in the Miniature Silky Fainting Goat Association registry that Orr started.

A main requirement is size. Optimal height for the miniature breed is 23 1/2 in. at the withers for bucks, 25 at the most. Does should be slightly smaller.

"When competing we are looking for good conformation. They are sturdy, streamlined and elegant with bangs, cheek muffs and beards blending into their chest of hair. They need consistency of hair length from the top line to the floor," Orr says.

She adds that the long silky hair is not difficult to maintain if the hair is a single coat. It only needs a couple brushings a year.

"It's a higher micron so it's not good for spinning. We want high luster," she adds.

Though fainting is in the breed's name, it's not a mandatory trait. It's not always a dominant gene, so some goats don't faint at all while others merely stiffen and some seem to fall over 'at the drop of a hat,' Orr says.

The benefit of fainting goats is that they are more resistant to stomach worms and they don't jump, so they are easier to keep fenced in. Orr's four-board fence is sufficient.

The medium size of the miniature goats avoids the kidding problems that smaller breeds have, and they are good mothers.

"They appeal to people who don't want to milk their goats or send them to market," Orr says. Good show and breeding stock are more expensive, but pet wethers can be found at reasonable prices.

Interest has been growing and competitive shows are held across the U.S., April through June and then again September through October.

For show dates and more information, check out the association website.

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Walden's movable "pig till" pen is easily moved by a rope pull at one end.

## They Let Rooting Pigs Till Their Garden

Instead of working horses, Homer Walden has working pigs. They start with turf, then till and fertilize it into a garden bed.

Walden discovered "pig tilling" a couple of decades ago, when he put four 30-lb. pigs in a chicken tractor for temporary housing. The next morning, the turf it was on was completely turned over. He moved it ahead and the pigs continued to root, which solved his problem of not owning a tractor to dig up the ground for a garden.

The chicken wire structure was soon replaced with better materials and a design for a movable pen that Walden has improved several times over the years. He includes instructions on how to build pig tillers (for \$500-\$600) that can be used for multiple purposes in his book, "Low Tech Farmer."

"The wheel system has been the biggest development. It works on a fulcrum with the axle attached with wheels. You pull the rope that lifts the pen in the air instead of dragging it," Walden explains.

The 4 by 10-ft. portable pen is built with pressure-treated wood and heavy-duty livestock panels, and includes a PVC waterer that holds 7 gal. of water. It's covered with a sturdy 8-oz. tarp.

Along with the pen, Walden has developed an efficient process that works well for him in North Carolina. In August, he starts with two 30-lb. pigs that learn quickly to help push the pen when Walden moves it. At first it's daily, then moves occur twice a day, then more often as the pigs grow.

"They are digging 8-in. deep at 150 lbs.,"

he says. "They really fluff it up."

By March, the pigs are ready for butchering at about 250 lbs. He can sell one and put the other in his freezer. The meat is healthy, low fat and tasty, Walden says.

Along with using pigs for tilling, he developed a sustainable process - from obtaining free waste food for his pigs from a bakery, restaurant and school, to leveling the areas his pigs till and using landscape fabric, to prevent weeds from growing.

"The beds should get covered as soon as weed seeds sprout and composted for six months under the ground cover. This will sanitize the pig manure. Then uncover the bed and direct seed or burn holes in the ground cover to plant seedlings for a weed-proof garden," Walden says.

He also adapted the pen for poultry that is moved about 2 weeks ahead of the pig tiller. The chickens leave behind valuable nitrogen for the soil. With just an acre of ground, it's a process that can work for others, Walden says. He's currently experimenting with a 6-acre circle where the pig tiller starts on the outside and works its way to the middle for continuous succession planting.

His website includes a short video of his tiller in action and other low-tech methods he has developed, plus his book and hardware kit for his pig tiller.

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The reflective light from pinwheels helps to deter predators and keep chickens safe.

## He Keeps Chickens Safe With Pinwheels

When Andy Wessel of Glen Allen, Va., started his pastured poultry egg business, he named it Pinwheel Farm because the fans of a pinwheel represent the circular patterns of nature he copied, including rotational grazing.

It has another meaning as well since he uses simple pinwheels to chase off hawks and coyotes when he has livestock on pasture.

Wessel has chickens on two different properties that he visits each day to do chores - feed, water, collect eggs, and move the coop/fencing once a week. There were coyotes and hawks in the area, so he needed to take some preventative measures. In his research he read about the pinwheels online.

"The theory is that the reflective light

messes with the birds' eyes," he says.

Wessel zip-ties and/or tapes the pinwheel sticks to 12-ft. long pieces of bamboo that he got from a friend. He slips the bamboo over rebar he jabs into the ground. They're easy to pull up and move when the coop is moved. He also attaches pinwheels to the tops of mobile coops.

Wessel notes that he only lost one chicken, to a hawk, that managed to get outside the fencing. He uses a "sparkly holographic pinwheel reflective whirl pinwheels" he purchased on Amazon for about \$2/each.

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## Ketchup 'N' Fries "Pomato" Plant

How about getting tomatoes and potatoes from the same plant? FARM SHOW first wrote about the idea 20 years ago.

Now there's a pregrafted "pomato" plant on the market called Ketchup 'N' Fries. You can buy the grafted plant potted and ready to go, but you can also graft your own.

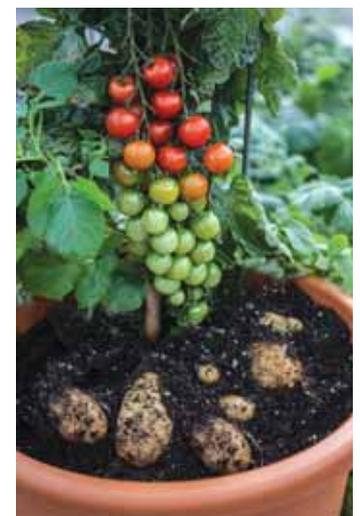
Simply match up same-sized stems of a potato and tomato. Trim the tomato stem into a wedge shape. Slit the potato stem down the center the same length as the trimmed portion of the tomato. Slip the wedge in and wrap the joint with grafting tape.

The idea works because the 2 plants are in the same botanical family. The advertising for Ketchup 'N' Fries shows plants loaded with both potatoes and cherry tomatoes.

FARM SHOW staff hasn't tried the idea but some gardeners on YouTube say it's not quite so easy. Some say they get tomatoes but not so many potatoes.

It could be a fun experiment. If you try it, let us know how it goes.

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A tomato and potato plant grafted together grows both from the same plant. Both plants are in the same botanical family.