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## Swedish Hens Saved From Extinction

The Swedish Flower hen (Skånsk blommehöna, which translates to “bloom hen”) is a rare breed with a lot of appeal for backyard chicken lovers worldwide. This colorful bird gets its name from the white-tipped feathers that breeders say mimics the look of a field of blooming flowers.

They come from Sweden, where domestic chickens were first introduced over 2,000 years ago. There the birds interbred to create the distinct breeds that the region is known for today. That makes the Swedish Flower Hen a landrace breed, meaning that it developed over hundreds of years with minimal human intervention.

The region’s mild weather created favorable conditions for a dual-purpose chicken that soon became valued for both its meat production and egg-laying ability.

The Swedish Flower Hen was a common sight in rural villages for hundreds of years, but it began to diminish in popularity by the 1800’s due to the introduction of commercial chicken breeds. The adaption to these high producers was so sudden that the Flower Hen became a rare sight by the mid-1900’s and the total population soon shrank to under 500 birds.

Chicken enthusiasts took notice of their decline in the 1980’s and started a campaign to bring them back from the brink of extinction. Conservationists identified three distinct colonies in different Swedish towns and created a focused breeding program to revive them. The establishment of the Swedish Country Poultry Club in 1989 became the start of the country’s first living gene bank.

## Solar Yard Lights Power Themselves

Solar yard lights let you illuminate your property without relying on the grid.

The all-in-one solar lights contain everything necessary to operate a single unit and are fully weatherproof and water-resistant.

The battery often goes underground. Prices will vary based on brand but range from \$200 to \$500 for bestsellers on Amazon.

Many solar yard lights include built-in motion sensors to ensure they only operate when movement is detected. Some systems also auto-adjust their brightness based on the time of night.

LED lights last 25,000 hrs. or more. Solar lights on the market today should keep working for at least 25 years.

Thanks to its unique plumage and docile personality, the breed slowly attracted attention. It began to repopulate the Swedish towns it once called home, and the first breeding pairs made it to the United States in 2010. Today, these birds remain rare but are available for purchase as eggs or chicks across North America.

The Swedish Flower Hen’s base colors will be black, blue-gray, reddish-brown, white, red, or yellow. Each will have white on the feather’s tips, which creates a spotted appearance. You can find individuals with and without crests, though they tend to be on the smaller side and rarely block the birds’ eyesight.

Swedish Flower Hens are known for their calm and curious demeanor, as well as their intelligence and independence. Though they are exceptional foragers that can take care of themselves, the birds are also happy to be around people and other poultry and are rarely aggressive. They don’t tend to be broody, which is one of the reasons why the breed almost died out.

This hardy breed can tolerate a wide variety of climates and rarely succumbs to disease. It’s not unusual for the birds to live a decade or longer.

Swedish Flower Hens haven’t been recognized by poultry organizations outside of Sweden so there is no established breed standard.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Swedish Flower Hen Club of America (Facebook Group: [www.facebook.com/groups/764778697059746/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/764778697059746/)).



**Solar-powered LED lights last 25,000 hrs. or more.**

## Wisconsin Family Treasures Swiss Cookie Tradition

When the Meinen family gathers after Thanksgiving to make cookies, it’s about heritage and keeping a Swiss tradition alive. They make bratzeli cookies using molds that came to this country with immigrants in 1910.

Mike Meinen has two molds that represent the two Swiss regions his grandparents came from with eight imprints on each to create four cookies with designs on both sides. The symbols include a white stork with babies on its back, a lion monument honoring Swiss troops, the Swiss Cross that’s on the national flag, and Wilhelm Tell who symbolizes the struggle for freedom.

The molds are at least 140 years old, says Meinen, who spends most of the Thanksgiving weekend making cookies in his garden shed.

“By the time you’re done there’s a good layer of butter on everything,” he says with a laugh, adding that it’s also a smoky process.



**Bratzeli Swiss cookies are a Meinen family tradition during the holidays.**

The method is similar to making waffles, pressing a ball of dough between the cast-iron molds, heating it over a propane fire on one side and then turning it over to finish the other side. Meinen prefers to use the mold that is made of thinner cast iron for faster production, but he has to be careful that the cookies don’t burn.

“My dog and I usually split the first ones,” he says. “When the iron’s hot, it takes about 45 minutes to make a batch of 12 dozen cookies.”

The Meinen’s follow the recipe handed down to them: 3 C. sugar, 9 eggs, 3 C. melted butter and 12 C. flour. With no leavening ingredient, it’s a firm pressed cookie similar to shortbread.

Like hardtack, he says they get better with age. “They taste the best at the end of February, probably because you know they are the last ones,” he says.

They last that long because Meinen makes as many as 4,000 of them for gifts and the family. Nephews and family members bring the ingredients to make the dough.

Meinen admits that the best part of the tradition is bringing family together, and he’d like to continue the legacy.

“I wish I could get some irons made to spread around to the family. They could look back and say, ‘Uncle Mike gave us this iron,’” he says, adding he is interested in hearing from people who do sand pours and have a foundry or who have bratzeli irons.

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**Cast iron cookie molds over 140 years old are heated over a fire and turned to bake the cookies.**

## Pine Cone Picker Upper

“I noticed this year that my wife Teresa was having a little more trouble bending over to complete the spring pine cone cleanup around our place. Being a very helpful fellow, I went right out to my shop to make something to help her,” says Paul Tierney, Bloomington, Minn.

“I welded up a dustpan-shaped box out of sheet metal. I secured it to a broken shovel handle so it’s nice and light. She can now push cones into the pan with her foot and dump them into a bucket, all without bending.

“She loved it and had the yard cleaned up in no time.”

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**Pickup pan made from sheet metal and an old shovel handle saves bending over for pine cone clean-up.**

