



German Modena pigeon comes in a variety of colors. It's called a "Hen Pigeon" because of its long legs and how it stands like a chicken.

## "Hen Pigeon" Attracting Lots Of Fans

Bird-lover Brad Stuckey says he was smitten the first time he saw a "mini chicken pigeon." That was his impression of the German Modena Pigeon that is referred to as a "Hen Pigeon" because of its long legs and the way it stands like a chicken.

Six years later Stuckey has about 100 German Modena pigeons and is president of the German Modena Association, which he and Tim Heidrich, secretary/treasurer, started in 2019.

"They are really iconic for particular markings," Stuckey says of the breed. "I love the rich, crisp colors."

For example, pigeons with a Gazzi coloring are all white except for the head, upper throat, wings and tail. German Modena Pigeons with Schietti (black) or Magnani (almond) have more color all over.

"They are overall a hardy and pleasant breed. They can be a great beginner breed. The only challenge is that they are very lively, spunky and energetic. Males enjoy strutting and trying to woo females," he says.

The German Modena is the smallest of the Hen Pigeon group and originates from Italy as far back as the 1300's. German breeders began importing them in the 1870's, with

specific traits in mind to breed them into the elegant show bird they are today. Their legs, body and neck each make up 1/3 of the pigeon's height. The tail is short, closed and carried slightly high.

Pigeon hobbyists estimate there are at least 2,000 German Modena pigeons in the U.S., and interest is growing. There were 60 of them at the National Pigeon Association's 100th Anniversary Show in early 2020.

German Modena pigeons can live 10 to 15 years and are generally sold in pairs (\$20 to \$50/each bird). Since they go through a courtship ritual, keeping them together as a pair ensures they will get along and mate, Stuckey says.

The German Modena Association's goal is to teach members about maintaining the breed's characteristics and to provide camaraderie. Contact him or Heidrich for more information.

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Clinton Mantz, along with his son and a neighbor, built this "twin tractor" out of two Oliver 1950 100 hp. diesels.

## Rare Oliver "Twin Tractor"

Retired Iowa farmer Clinton Mantz says it took he, his son, and a neighbor almost a year to create a single articulated tractor out of two Oliver 1950 diesels.

"We were farming about 3,200 acres back then, before Steiger came out with their big 4-wheel drives, and we wanted more horsepower, so this was our solution," says Mantz. "We owned the 100 hp. tractors and had seen a similar setup, so we decided one winter to see if we could make it work."

The trio removed the front wheels and axles from both tractors, then built a coupling system on the drawbar of one tractor to hold the front end of the second one. That swivel mechanism allowed the tractors to articulate, with the weight of the back tractor keeping the front tractor level.

"We mounted hydraulic cylinders on both sides of the drawbar of the front tractor to the frame of the rear one. The cylinders turned the front tractor, and the back one then followed, just like articulated tractors do now," Mantz says. "We worked a long time on getting those cylinders to work together

because initially one would activate faster than the other. We put restrictors in the lines so the flow was equal."

Mantz says the operator rode on the back tractor and controlled both throttles and clutches from that location. "We'd start the front one first, put it in gear, then jump on the back one, put that in the same gear, and go to work. With the large flotation tires we had plenty of rubber on the ground, so traction was excellent." Mantz says they used the rig to pull a large tandem disk in the fall and a field cultivator in the spring.

"In tandem we had 200 hp., which was a big tractor for those days. We used it for 6 or 7 years and replaced it with a Steiger that had about 300 hp."

Mantz says he sold the twin Oliver's to a farmer who he thought retrofitted both 1950's back to their original 4-wheel front steering configuration.

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Alison LaCourse supplies home gardeners with high-quality seed potatoes of all kinds. Bagged potatoes are shown here ready for shipment.

## Maine Potato Lady Knows Her Spuds

Alison LaCourse knows what she is talking about when it comes to potatoes. Doing business as the Maine Potato Lady, she supplies home gardeners and larger scale growers with high-quality seed potatoes of all kinds. LaCourse was a seed potato producer for 15 years before becoming a seed potato reseller a decade ago.

"We sell in quantities of 1 lb. to 5,000 lbs.," says LaCourse. "It's all mail order. Everyone orders from the same catalog, which we produce every December."

LaCourse works with a network of certified organic and certified seed potato producers, who supply her with more than 60 different varieties. She offers early, mid and late season varieties, as well as fingerlings. In addition, she offers smaller numbers of garlic, onions, shallots, sweet potatoes, heritage grains and some perennial flowers.

"Each year I introduce a few new varieties," says LaCourse. "In 2020 I added Moulin Rouge, a red-skinned, yellow flesh fingerling, and Magic Molly, a blue skinned, blue fleshed fingerling. I also introduced Belmonda, an early maturing yellow potato."

LaCourse likes to run trials of new varieties in her own gardens before adding them to her catalog. If that isn't possible, she trials them the year they are introduced. That was the case with both Moulin Rouge and Belmonda this past season.

LaCourse cites growth in interest in fingerlings and in colored potatoes as two ways the potato market has changed during her career. "When we first started growing yellows to sell, people didn't even know how to fix them," she says. "Back then, it was like



Photo shows 3 lbs. of the Magic Molly variety grown from one plant by a customer.

it is today with blue potatoes."

Another big change is more recent as home gardening has boomed. It is a trend the long-term gardener appreciates.

LaCourse suggest new potato growers start with old standbys like the Norland Red and longtime white potatoes. "Look for all-purpose potatoes that will grow under lots of different conditions," she says. "If something doesn't grow well, try something else the next year."

Her personal favorite is the German Butterball. "It's my tried and true variety," says LaCourse. "I do lots of trials of other varieties, but it is what I grow for our use."

Her website has tips on how much to order to produce the desired yield, as well as how to grow potatoes, sweet potatoes and the various plants offered.

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## "Long Reach" Fruit Picking Tool

"My wife couldn't reach high enough with our metal fruit picking basket to harvest fruit in tall trees, even when using a ladder. So I extended the tool from 5 ft. long to 16 ft. by replacing the wooden handle with a paint roller extension pole," says Doug Johnson, Aberdeen, Wash.

"We have fruit trees and we have bears, and in the fall, the bears can strip a tree overnight. I don't begrudge them the food, but they really damage the trees so it's important to harvest the fruit before they do. Timing is important," says Johnson.

The fruit picker's original handle was held on by a hose clamp. Johnson loosened the clamp and threw the handle away, then stuck the paint roller extension pole into the basket and retightened the clamp.

He says the telegraphing pole can be adjusted as short as the original fruit basket handle, or lengthened to about 16 ft. "The extension pole is as solid as the original pole. I paid only \$3 for it at a second hand store," notes Johnson.

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Johnson replaced the 5-ft. wooden handle on his fruit picking tool with a paint roller extension pole, extending the length to 16 ft.