

The Scratch Pad



Volume 1, Issue 4

August 2011

Best crop of all: Grow your own micro mini farmers

By Veronica Wood

I love to garden with my kids.

It's not always a perfect Edwardian picture of gentle gardening with the little ones planting and harvesting in their crisp white outfits, their angelic faces turned to the sun like the lovely little sunflowers that they are—sigh.

Every once in a while I get that (sans the crisp white outfits), but mostly it's them pushing dirt around with their trucks and flinging it into each other's eyes on occasion.



They love to be outside and so do I. With the warmer weather, we find ourselves working on our veggie garden—or what I like to call our Micro Mini Farm.

I've found that when the kids have some say in what's planted and are a part of the whole process, they eat better and much more willingly.

I loved getting rid of a large chunk of our front lawn in favor of space to grow edibles.

If you don't have space to create a full-on Urban Homestead, there are spots you may be able to put in a berry bush or fruit tree. You could give container gardening a shot or take out a plot at a local P-Patch.

We can also look to our local farms and farmer's markets for fresh food experiences with our kids, letting them pick out some new things to try at home.

Here are just a few ideas to help turn your little ones into Micro Mini Farmers:

Give them a spot of their own

We don't always have room for this, but, if you do, designate a spot for your kids to have total control over. I used some birch branches to create a small patch for my kids and for 3 years in a row they've grown rainbow chard on one side and rainbow carrots on the other.

Pick something kid friendly

Plants like pumpkins, berries, carrots, greens, potatoes, tomatoes, and radishes are easy to plant, grow, and especially pick. Let them try something that appeals to them.

Make a bean teepee

Either you or someone you know probably has an out-of-control clump of bamboo, right? Take around 8-10 poles (if not bamboo, then scrap lumber or plastic PVC piping), dig them into the ground in a circle and bind them at the top. Make little mounds at the base of each and plant 2 or 3 seeds in each mound. Don't forget to leave an opening for your little ones to enter and exit.

We plant sugar snap peas to climb up during the spring and as they die down plant pole beans to take over for the summer.

Go with a theme garden

Your kids may enjoy planning and implementing a theme garden. For example, a Pizza Garden could contain tomatoes, basil, peppers and zucchini. A Peter Rabbit Garden could have carrots, lettuce and spinach.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 [Our journey to becoming an official co-op](#)
- 3 [Co-op warehouse items](#)
- 3 [Contact Seattle Farm Co-op & connect w/ members](#)
- 4 [A radical idea: hope in a bulb](#)
- 5 [Kids dig 'em, so can you: bugs!](#)

From buying club to LLC to official co-op: soon you can become a member-owner!

By Charmaine Slaven, Co-op co-founder and Steering Committee member

The Seattle Farm Co-op was created in February of 2009 with the idea of forming a buying club to procure affordable, organic feed. It was a group of small-livestock owners living in Seattle who wanted an alternative to driving to far-off rural feed stores, as well as avoiding the high prices being charged at boutique pet stores for livestock feed.

We started with a small but enthusiastic group of primarily chicken-owners, and ordered our first ton of feed, which was delivered to a volunteer's home garage. Since that first order, word spread quickly, and demand from the community increased exponentially!

A core group of 6 volunteers: Amy Stevenson, Charmaine Slaven, James Whitaker, Maya Beal, Amie Broadsword, and Lacia Bailey came together to form the Steering Committee to get this project off the ground. As the buying club quickly grew, the Steering Committee formed an LLC (limited liability company) to deal with the logistics of business liability and taxes associated with the ordering of tons of feed.

The LLC was intended to be a temporary structure, with the understanding that once we could file as an official co-op with the State of Washington, we would discontinue the LLC.

We're almost to that stage, and have finally completed the required preliminary paperwork, and are hoping to file with the state once our paperwork is reviewed. We are hoping to kick off our official co-op membership drive this fall!!

We felt strongly about becoming a co-op, as this business model is much more sustainable and democratic than more traditional business models.

Several of us attended a workshop called SLICE (Strengthening Local Independent Co-ops Everywhere) over the last couple of years, hosted by Central Co-op. This education enforced our commitment to the co-op ideal.

A cooperative (often referred to as a co-op) is a business organization owned and operated by a group of individuals for their mutual benefit. Cooperatives are defined by the

International Cooperative Alliance's Statement on the Cooperative Identity as autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprises.

We want you all to feel empowered to become member-owners this fall. In the past year, we've been through a lot!

- We've been joined by volunteer Christy Cusick, who is our newest member on the Steering Committee.
- We've managed to acquire and move into new warehouse space, creating concrete system for training volunteers to run the warehouse store.
- We've created better and more accountable systems for managing inventory, and have added many new items to the store.
- We've worked hard on finishing the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws needed to start our co-op, and dealt with uncountable hurdles.
- We've become a huge resource to the local urban farming community, and hope to continue to grow with your help and support.

We get many folks asking how they can best help and support us.

Easiest is to continue to purchase your feed and supplies from our warehouse store. Open hours are posted at www.seattlefarmcoop.com. Shifts are entirely volunteer-run, so be sure to thank the folks volunteering their time. If you want to be trained on volunteering at the warehouse,

contact christy@seattlefarmcoop.com and she'll get you signed up.

We also need volunteers to help table at summertime events, contact amy@seattlefarmcoop.com if you'd like to help us with tabling.

Writers for our quarterly newsletter, the ScratchPad, are often needed. Email April at lolatu2002@yahoo.com if you'd like to write.

We post periodically to the listserv with other volunteer opportunities, but really the most valuable volunteer work is that which you can come up with on your own, as we're quite limited on our time to be volunteer coordinators.

Continued on next page



Co-op Warehouse Items

Email info@seattlefarmcoop.com to make sure what you need is in stock.

Bulk Items

Grit
Oyster Shell
Diatomaceous Earth
Bulk Feed (Pastured Sensations or Crying Rock)
Straw and Hay
Pine Shavings

Housewares/Hardware

Waterers
Feeders
DIY Waterer Nipples
Brooder Lights
Brooder Bulbs
Canning Jars and Lids

Books

The Transition Handbook

Feed Brands

Scratch and Peck
Naturally Free (NF) Layer
NF Grower
NF Starter
3 Grain Scratch
Org. Cracked Corn
Goat Feed

Rogue

Pelleted Layer Feed
Rabbit Feed
Alfalfa Pellets

In Season Farms

Org. 16% Layer Mash
Org. 20% Layer Mash
Org. Poultry Starter
Org. Poultry Grower
Org. Dairy Goat Feed
Org. Alfalfa Pellets
Org. Hen Scratch

Half Moon

Layer Feed Pelleted
Layer Feed Crumbles
Hen Scratch

Items to be carried in the future

Apple cider vinegar
Cheese- and soap-making supplies

WORMS FOR SALE As a fundraiser for our co-op, you can now purchase red worms for composting or mealworms for chicken treats. [Find a volunteer worm farmer near you!](#) (On the Seattle Farm Co-op Yahoo group page: click **Database**, and then click **Worm Farmers**).

Seattle Farm Co-op history (cont.)

Continued from Page 2

Notice something that needs fixing when you're at the warehouse? Offer to fix it, and follow through!

See a question on the listserv you can answer? Answer it!

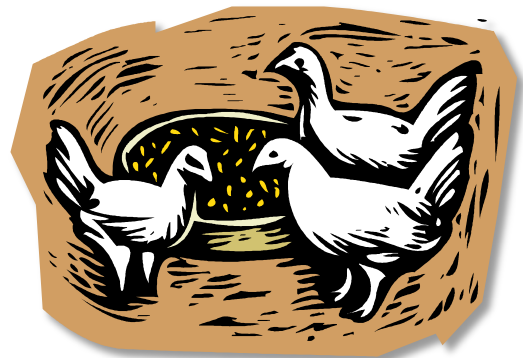
Notice that we need a certain product at the warehouse? Offer to make a DIY version (example: would love to find a carpenter to make feeders for us; we'll buy them).

Have expertise in a skill you'd like to share? Host a Skill Share Class (example: members have hosted humane slaughtering classes, foraging classes, etc.).

Host a neighborhood co-op party just to get to know your nearby co-op members (example: Aaron hosted a Wallingford co-op party at his place, as did Kari & Sheila in West Seattle).

Or, would you be willing to lead a team of volunteers to tackle a larger task (example: April stepped forward and now independently manages the Scratchpad newsletter)?

This is your co-op, and we want you all to feel empowered to pitch in and make it your own!



Contact Seattle Farm Co-op and Connect with Members

Email: info@seattlefarmcoop.com

Website: www.seattlefarmcoop.com

Snail Mail: Seattle Farm Co-op
P.O. Box 8430
Seattle, WA 98124-5606

Warehouse: 1937 Occidental Ave S

Yahoo Group Forum:
<http://gropus.yahoo.com/gropu/seattlefarmcoop>

Life with the Babylady and finding hope in a bulb

By Meg Brown

I am a weird mix of being a full-on optimist and a complete cynic. I find it increasingly difficult to find a lot of hope in the world at large.

So I do activities that ground and connect me. I cook. I read. And I garden. Gardening is my passion and my love. I approach gardening a bit like I do my cooking: with glee and reckless abandon. A mix of solid basic knowledge and intuition tossed with frequent bouts of over-zealousness.

A large part of my passion comes from believing gardening is a radical act. Or *can* be a radical act. It can add unexpected beauty in surprising places. It can make statements about land use and land rights. Edible gardening and urban farming can be a stand for food justice, which is where I "get my radical on."

"Food Justice is the right of communities everywhere to produce, distribute, access, and eat good food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion, or community. Good food is healthful, local, sustainable, culturally appropriate, humane, and produced for the sustenance of people and the planet."
—Community Alliance for Global Justice (Food Justice Project)



Isn't that how it should be? How is this really up for debate?

Healthy, non-toxic food for all. Not just for those than can afford it. Not just those that own/occupy land. Living wages for farmers and all farm workers. The ability to grow our own food, save our own seeds and build community. These are some of the values I want to instill in my daughter.

The Babylady, as we call her, is 3 ½ years old and has been in the garden with me from the time of the first spring plantings following her birth. From the beginning I talked to her about everything I was doing. She was attached to my back and listened to me yak on and on about compost, seeds, watering, sun, rain, tools, digging, beauty, crows and slugs—and was as happy as can be.

As she grew, she sat on a blanket under the watchful eye of our older dog, Otter, while I worked in the garden. Attentive and curious, she would babble and point to birds and plants.

When she began to crawl and walk, out came that hideous piece of plastic that was simultaneously the bane of my existence and my sanity-saver: the dreaded exersaucer (It was the saucer or rock-eating; you do what you gotta do!).

Soon she grew too big for garden containment and was off and running. That summer she discovered plant markers and collected them in her tiny watering can. This summer she helps plant seeds (sort of) and finds slugs to relocate (to the chicken run). Mostly, however, she is content to pick and eat all my radishes.

She has been picking food to eat from the garden from the time she ate solids. She will happily munch on strawberries, tomatoes, kale, parsley, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower leaves, lettuce, lovage, chives, peas, beans for as long as I let her. She begs to go outside and pick kale and onions. Totally awesome and a tad bizarre.

Her love has now spread to our flock of chickens. When she is not serenading them with their namesake songs, she avidly picks weeds and slug-bitten strawberries to feed them.

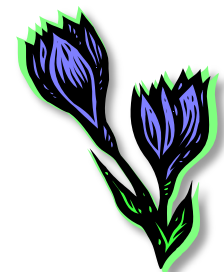
She loves to hear the seasonal stories about herself growing up in our garden. My favorite is a story that brought me hope. Hope for our world.

Before she turned two we picked up *Planting a Rainbow* by Lois Ehlert from the library. It's a beautiful, simple book that illustrates the planting of bulbs, seeds and seedlings, and how they grow to produce a rainbow of colors.

Shortly after reading she begged to, "Go outside. Pick kale. Pick kale. Go outside." So on a rare sunny January Seattle day we walked in the garden and she crouched to look at some crocuses (that I have never mentioned) and she pointed and exclaimed, "BULBS! BULBS! BULBS! Plant rainbow!" and looked up at me and smiled her awesome, dimpled, gap-toothed grin.

A 2-year-old. Engaged in her world. Engaged with her people. Engaged in her garden.

Now, that is Hope in a Bulb.



Meg Brown lives in West Seattle with her partner, daughter, dog and 10 chickens. She blogs at [Grow and Resist](#) and has an edible landscape design/consulting business, [Brown Dirt](#).

Sharing a childlike fascination for... BUGS

By Sarah Moore

When I go out to garden with my son, I hope that working with plants and animals will ground him, teach him to value life, the virtue of work, the wonder of nature and how precious it is.

But more often I seem to tap into a much deeper place in both of us that is simply fascinated with the creepy, parasitic, grubby, cannibalistic world in our yard.

Some of my favorites are earwigs, slugs, and wasps, especially mud daubers.

When my son and his friends garden with me, I build in time to get side tracked by these little residents of our yard. I find that many kids are drawn in as well.



Kids who are afraid of the goats, or who simply shrug at the chickens, might be fascinated to find out that the tiny mound at the soil line is worm poop. A child might not be as attracted to the flower as to the crab spider living inside it and catching the bees that come there for nectar.

Chrysalis found on kale will often thrive in jars and transform into glorious butterflies, or at least into cabbage whites. The spider in the basement or in a corner of the ceiling will be just as happy building a web in the corner of an aquarium.

But with a few exceptions, I haven't had much luck bringing bugs inside as pets. Spiders adapted to live outdoors tend to languish in captivity. Pupae that you dig up in the soil may need to be at outdoor temperatures to develop correctly. Plant-eating species need a constant supply of food, and shy bugs like earwigs simply hide.

Often we will keep a bug pet for a day or two before releasing it where it was found.

If you are shy of bugs, you do not need to touch them. Use a magnifying glass, or bring them in the house to learn from them. Just look, talk and get to know them better. If your child is more comfortable than you are, let them take the lead. It can be very special for a kid to be the one with the confidence.

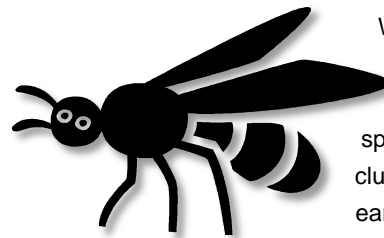
Get a picture guide book, and look up bugs. Knowing more about them is empowering if they make you uncomfortable.

If you have one, a worm bin is a wonderful mini zoo that rewards you with many species other than worms. Exploring the life in there provides a great opportunity to discuss the diversity of life. Like a trip to the beach, only right at home.

Slugs, worms, and millipedes belong to three different phyla (mollusks, annelids and arthropods). I hope you don't have rodent problems, but that would be a fourth, the vertebrates! You may also have fungus, spiders and millipedes (also arthropods).

Exploring the different habitats within your garden can help reinforce the message that all life shares common needs for food, shelter, water, and companionship. It can graphically illustrate the power of human activity in disrupting or preserving habitats.

Knowing our bugs has helped my child accept food with minor flaws in exchange for not using chemical pest control. Yet he also accepts that the chickens are higher up the food chain, and we are higher still.



Watching bugs also provides a jumping off spot for much speculation. We usually find clusters of slugs and earwigs, but centipedes and rove beetles are often solitary.

What might explain the differences? What environments are best for which bugs? How can we use that information to attract or discourage them?

The great thing about these discussions is you don't need to know the answers. Just talk, think and explore. The farm chores will still be there when you finish.

