

The Scratch Pad



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Springtime is slime time in sluggish Seattle

By Sarah Moore

For many gardeners, one of the biggest adaptations to gardening in the northwest is the slugs. Slugs seem to be everywhere, and before the soil is warm, they can eat faster than plants can grow.

Still, I am fascinated by slugs.

They have a hole in their side called a pneumostome, which opens into their lung. I love how you can watch them breathe. They have two sets of tentacles, one with eyes and odor detectors, one for taste and feel. Inside the mouth is the radula, an abrasive chewing tongue.

The hump on their back is their mantle, which houses their guts, gonads and other organs. All the body behind and below it is a muscular foot, with no major organs except for mucus glands, where slime comes from.

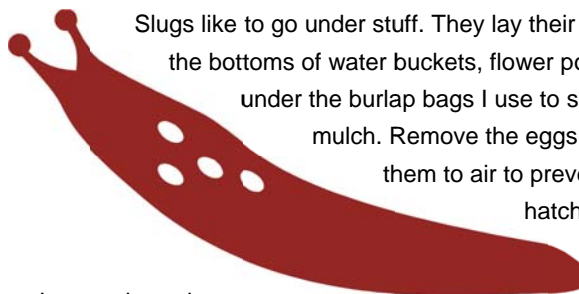
Slugs can alter the texture of slime; it can lubricate their forward movement, be stickier for traction, or strong enough to support the slugs during mating. That is a whole other article!

I admit, though, after admiring them, I go on slug patrol. I've given up on setting out shallow dishes of stale beer, which trap slugs but get icky pretty fast.

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I mostly do search and destroy. You can predict how slugs behave and where to find them. Observe their behavior to be a better slug hunter. Plant a few lettuces, their favorite plant, in advance of putting anything else in a space, and hand pick the slugs off of them. Use the big, inexpensive envelopes of chicken lettuce seed at the co-op, and feed the damaged leaves to the chickens.



Slugs like to go under stuff. They lay their eggs on the bottoms of water buckets, flower pots, and under the burlap bags I use to sheet mulch. Remove the eggs or expose them to air to prevent hatching.

Learn where the most slugs are and collect them from those spots instead of hand picking all over the garden. Often just putting out a damp board is enough to get all the slugs into one spot for easy collection. Slugs like to be damp but not wet. In rainy weather they crawl up vertical surfaces to avoid drowning.

Try feeding slugs to your or someone else's chickens.

My hens prefer them coated. I collect them into a bowl of small grained chicken scratch, and then shake them around in it. This seems to make them more palatable. Other people place slugs in soapy water or cut them in half.

I work at Pacific Science Center, where we seasonally [exhibit banana slugs](#). If you find an unwelcome banana slug in your garden, I accept donations. But banana slugs are usually in less cultivated areas, where they do little harm. The black and brown slugs in the garden are usually leopard slugs, the smaller ones are grey garden slugs – the real crop destroyers.

Last and very important, if you find yourself with slime on your hands, *do not wash with soap and water*. Slug slime can absorb water and get even slimier. Instead, wipe your hands with dirt or paper towels until they feel dry. Then you can safely wash them.

Add some rabbits to your urban farm

By Brad Andonian

In these uncertain times many of us are looking for a degree of self-reliance. Whether a veggie patch or eggs from a chicken, these expressions of personal choice are growing in many parts of America. Meat rabbits offer the urban farmer a most attractive activity, providing a number of benefits:

- fresh meat
- excellent fertilizer
- personal growth and satisfaction
- low ecological impact

I have raised rabbits since 2009, a practice I backed into when starting our farm www.abundantacres-farm.com. I actively watched their behavior and learned their nuances.

Breeding of rabbits is a well-known joke. As a prey animal, they have the ability to reproduce quickly. However, they are easily stressed. Pregnancy, litter health, development, and comfort can all be impacted.

What to do

I would start with two does and a buck; breed both at the same time. Rabbit gestation is quick—31 days! Be prepared with hay and a nest box for them on day 28. Properly raised, one rabbit doe can yield about 100 pounds of meat a year (per cage). If you are thrifty and have a decent-sized yard, you can likely feed this size herd with little purchased feed—and have a grand time doing so.

Rabbit Feed

Most folks feed a commercial pellet. I have a custom-made pellet for our herd. We feed a 19% protein feed; most commercial pellets are 16% protein. If you are thrifty, you can use brush and weeds from your yard to lower cost.

Bear in mind they will grow slower and have a “gamier” flavor—but you will know exactly what your herd is consuming.

Always have fresh, clean water for your rabbits; they will not eat without it, and of course it’s necessary for health. I recommend a 32-ounce nipple waterer. Check it twice daily and refresh as needed; rabbits drink more overnight!

Rabbit Housing

Keep them in wire cages off the ground. If you have chickens, keep the birds off the cages to ensure rabbit

health. The feces from chickens are not going to help your bunnies! However, rabbit manure is great feed for your birds, and the eggs will have a wonderful orange hue.

Rabbit Breeding

Check the doe for receptivity: her vulva should be dark pink to red; pale pink is not going to cut it. Let the buck breed her two or three times. Always put the doe in his cage. They will fight if you place him in hers.

Litters should be checked twice daily until age two weeks, when they start leaving the box. Remove dead kits to ensure health of the litter.

I breed our does back six weeks after the previous litter was born. I start breeding at 18 to 20 weeks of age. Contrary to opinion, a doe does not have to be fully grown to breed and will not stop growing if bred at this age.



Location

Locate your rabbits on the north to northeast side of a building to minimize weather and sun impacts.

Always have water available. Hay is not required for health, but a great optional feed. We provide unsprayed hay weekly for good gut health and chewing interest. Blackberry and raspberry vines are also appreciated by rabbits.

When the temperature rises above 75 degrees, a frozen soda bottle will add thermal mass and prevent heat sterility in males.

I hope this is helpful. I am willing to provide assistance or stock if needed! (cereshill@yahoo.com)

Online resources to consider are:

www.rabbittalk.com

www.homesteadingtoday.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CENTRAL PUGET SOUND SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE

DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 7

TIME: 10 AM – 4 PM

PLACE: BELLEVUE BOTANICAL GARDEN

SEATTLE TILTH EDIBLE PLANT SALE

DATE: SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, MAY 7 AND 8

TIME: 9 AM – 3 PM

PLACE: 4649 SUNNYSIDE AVE. N

MORE INFO:

[HTTP://SEATTLETILTH.ORG/SPECIAL_EVENTS/EDIBLEPLANTSALE2011](http://seattletilth.org/special_events/edibleplantsale2011)

GROW FOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY

DATE: MAY THRU SEPTEMBER – VARIOUS DAYS AND TIMES

PLACE: VARIOUS SEATTLE PARKS LOCATIONS

MORE INFO: [HTTP://SEATTLETILTH.ORG/LEARN/CLASSES-AND-WORKSHOPS/CLASSESATPARKS](http://seattletilth.org/learn/classes-and-workshops/classesatparks)

Seattle Tilth teaches apartment and condominium dwellers how to grow vegetables and herbs in containers and how to compost food waste indoors or on balconies or patios. Great for beginning and experienced gardeners, these classes will help you get new ideas and troubleshoot any challenges with your site. Learn how to grow your own food organically and reduce waste - even if you don't have a yard or P-Patch plot.

FIRST ANNUAL LOPEZ LAMB & WOOL FESTIVAL

DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 14

TIME: 10 AM – 3 PM

Free sheep and wool events including shearing, spinning, felting and weaving demonstrations, fleece and handspun yarn sales, and hands-on activities for everyone. From 6-8 pm, there will be a fabulous Lopez lamb and vegetable feast prepared by acclaimed Matt Dillon of Seattle's Sitka & Spruce, with a no-host bar for wine from award winning Lopez Island Vineyards. Tickets must be purchased in advance for the dinner. To purchase tickets, or for questions, contact Island Fibers at 360-468-2467, fibers@islandfibers.com, www.islandfibers.com

KEEPING CHICKENS IN THE CITY

DATE: MONDAY, MAY 16

TIME: 2:30 – 3:30 PM

PLACE: STREET BEAN ESPRESSO (2702 3RD AVE.)

REGISTER AT [SEATTLE FREE SCHOOL](#)

CARING FOR YOUNG FRUIT TREES WITH CITY FRUIT

DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 21

TIME: 10 AM – NOON

PLACE: JACKSON PLACE COHOUSING 800 HIAWATHA PL. SE

REGISTER AT [BROWN PAPER TICKETS](#)

PRICE: \$15 FOR MEMBERS, \$20 FOR NON-MEMBERS

BUILD A 5 GALLON GARDEN MASTER STOVE

DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 21

TIME: 10 AM – 6 PM

PLACE: VILLAGE GREEN PERENNIAL NURSERY

REGISTER INFO@SEACHAR.ORG. \$45 DONATION, \$25 MATERIALS DEPOSIT VIA PAYPAL AT SEACHAR.ORG.

MORE INFO: ART.DONNELLY@SEACHAR.ORG.

CARING FOR YOUNG FRUIT TREES WITH CITY FRUIT

DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 21

TIME: 10 AM – NOON

PLACE: JACKSON PLACE COHOUSING 800 HIAWATHA PL. SE

REGISTER AT [BROWN PAPER TICKETS](#)

PRICE: \$15 FOR MEMBERS, \$20 FOR NON-MEMBERS

ORGANIC PEST MANAGEMENT WITH CITY FRUIT

DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 28

TIME: 10 AM – NOON

PLACE: BRADNER GARDENS PARK: 1733 BRADNER PL. S

REGISTER AT [BROWN PAPER TICKETS](#)

PRICE: \$15 FOR MEMBERS, \$20 FOR NON-MEMBERS

LOW-SUGAR JAM WITH CITY FRUIT

DATE: SATURDAY, JUNE 4

TIME: 10 AM – NOON

PLACE: PHINNEY RIDGE LUTHERAN CH: 7500 GREENWOOD AVE N

REGISTER AT [BROWN PAPER TICKETS](#)

PRICE: \$15 FOR MEMBERS, \$20 FOR NON-MEMBERS

KNOW YOUR GRASSES: THE IDENTIFICATION AND APPRECIATION OF GRASS

DATE: WEDNESDAY - FRIDAY, JUNE 15 - 17

PLACE: ROOM 246, HITCHCOCK HALL, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

PRICE: \$350. MORE INFO:

[HTTP://WWW.WNPS.ORG/WORKSHOPS/GRASS-WORKSHOP.HTML](http://www.wnps.org/workshops/grass-workshop.html).

OR CONTACT: CLAY ANTIEAU (CLAY39@NETZERO.NET)

ORGANIC PEST MANAGEMENT WITH CITY FRUIT

DATE: SATURDAY, JUNE 18

TIME: 10 AM – NOON

PLACE: GREEN BEAN COFFEEHOUSE: 8533 GREENWOOD AVE N

REGISTER AT [BROWN PAPER TICKETS](#)

PRICE: \$15 FOR MEMBERS, \$20 FOR NON-MEMBERS

JAM-MAKING BASICS WITH CITY FRUIT

DATE: SATURDAY, JUNE 25

TIME: 2 – 4 PM

PLACE: JACKSON PLACE COHOUSING 800 HIAWATHA PL. SE

REGISTER AT [BROWN PAPER TICKETS](#)

PRICE: \$15 FOR MEMBERS, \$20 FOR NON-MEMBERS

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

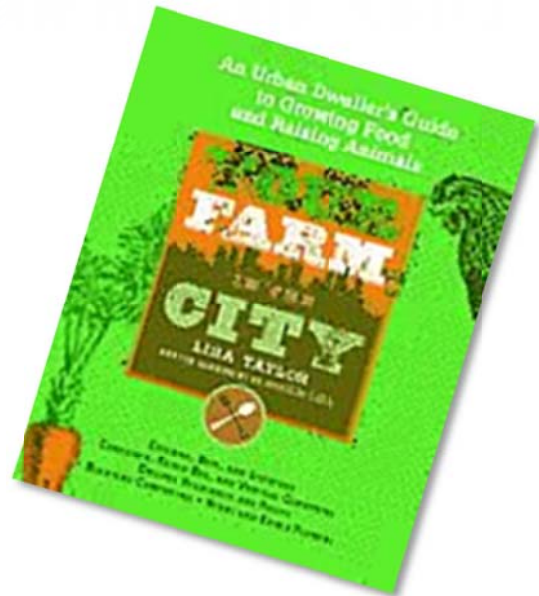
Items to be carried in the future

Apple cider vinegar
Cheese making supplies
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 book leads the way in urban farming

By Roxanne Kenison



Seattle Farm Co-op members don't need to be told that they can farm their urban micro-acreage to feed their family, or even run a small business. But now readers everywhere can be inspired to farm in the city, and learn the basics of how to, thanks to *Your Farm in the City*, by Lisa Taylor and Seattle Tilth, just published this year.

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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>

Book Review (cont.)

Continued from page 4

Written for the beginning gardener, or gardeners trying to figure out how to incorporate agriculture into their city lot – and to do so with sustainable, organic practices – this book is destined to be the one-stop, all-inclusive guide. It's packed with information, not slick, color photos. And yet, Taylor has done a good job of making the prospect of starting a city farm within reach of the average person.



Start small, be pragmatic

For one thing, she advises starting small. “There is an old saying,” she writes, “that you should never plant more than your partner can weed and water.” She devotes a chapter to planning, encouraging eager new farmers to hone their focus. “Growing several things well is more satisfying than trying to grow everything with minimal success,” she admonishes.

The pragmatic theme continues with garden placement: “For every foot you move your vegetable garden away from the kitchen, the less likely it is that you’ll make the trek to tend it.” And making garden beds narrow to accommodate children’s proclivity for jumping or (attempting to) step over them. “If your family garden beds are 2 feet wide or wider, you will be constantly fighting the kids to ‘stop jumping the beds,’ Create a garden that fits your family rather than trying to change the kids.”

Sustainable practices promoted

Being from Seattle Tilth, it’s not surprising that this book includes a whole chapter devoted to building the soil, with information on how to compost, use a worm bin, mulch, and plant cover crops. Practices that promote sustainability (seed-saving, catching rainwater, rotating crops, and more) permeate the text.

The chapter on insects helps you identify the beneficial ones, as well as the ones you probably don’t want around... unless you think of them as food for the beneficials.

There are tips for small-space gardening and extending the harvest beyond summer. The chapter on food preservation includes handy information about preserving specific kinds of fruits and vegetables. There’s also a chapter about keeping small livestock, if you want to round out your urban farm with poultry, rabbits, goats, or bees.

Specific guidelines for over 40 crops

Many pages are devoted to detailing over 40 vegetables, herbs, fruit, and edible flowers. Information on how to grow, how (and when) to harvest, and recommended varieties are provided. The crops are chosen for being “the best and easiest-to-grow top choices for your city farm.” Rewarded with success, you’re more likely to stay in the game—so you can learn more, and develop some urban-farming muscle.

Packed with information, pages to busy?

Sprinkled throughout are profiles of organizations and practices worth learning more about: Seattle Tilth (naturally), Seed Savers Exchange, urbanfarming.org, permaculture activities, and more. A useful list of resources, recommendations for tools, sample urban farm layouts, and a glossary round out the book.

My only complaint is the book’s graphical design. Pages are so chock-full of sidebars, tables, pull-quotes and full-page treatment of selected topics that it’s difficult to follow the narrative. A large, all-capital, industrial typeface could be used charmingly to announce major changes of topic (such as chapter titles), but instead shouts out everywhere in a visual cacophony of things competing for my attention. It takes a while to get used to all this clutter and focus on the useful, pragmatic information in this collection of 300-plus pages.

