

Community Rah Rah Rah

End the grass occupation!

FOOD NOT LAWNS: *How to Turn Your Yard into a Garden and Your Neighborhood into a Community*, nonfiction by Heather Coburn Flores. Chelsea Green, 2006. Paperback, \$25.

About two chapters into Heather Coburn Flores' *Food Not Lawns*, my eyelids started to droop — or maybe twitch. No, I wasn't bored; I was simply overwhelmed, the kind of overwhelmed that's easy to get in Eugene (probably it's easy to feel it in Portland too, but at least PDX has rapacious gentrifying capitalists putting in over-priced condos to balance things out).

You, Eugene Weekly faithful, you know what I mean: You recycle everything you can, try not to buy anything new, only watch TV when you're hanging out with friends at their houses. You love composting.

You have a garden, and you love cooking its myriad zucchini, winter squash, tomatoes, pumpkins, etc., etc., etc. But you might also like your iPod or your Internet. Maybe you get DVDs not only from Flicks 'n' Picks but

also Netflix. You drive your car — not every day, not a huge distance, but sometimes, it's gotta happen.

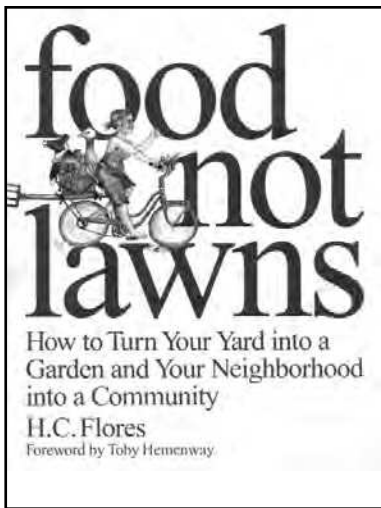
And maybe when you were in your salad days, you were part of a few too many groups using "consensus decision making" as a blunt instrument to browbeat members into agreement. So you tend to shy away like a rabbit that scents cat urine when you see statements about how you have to "look deep" and "use your spiritual sense" to analyze your potential

garden. Oh, *man*. Next thing you know, Flores is going to say that people who use knee pads and gloves while gardening aren't *really* in touch with the Earth. And ... she does.

My aching, soccer-injured knees and tender type 1-diabetic hands were not impressed. But rolling my eyes didn't help me deal with the book. I took breaks and returned when I found myself thinking things like, "The Weekly should have a community garden plot!" I came back because much of what Flores writes makes sense. After all, why *do* we have lawns? They're totally ridiculous except to play in or on, and many

of us in Eugene don't have anywhere near big enough front lawns for soccer or croquet. Why *aren't* we using that space to create neighborhood-focused organic plots o' joy? Seriously. Read this book, and every little plot of grass starts to look like a potential family-feeding space. A few starts, a bit of water (perhaps collected rainwater? Gray water from the kitchen sink?), and you're good to go.

nity-building than about gardening. For projects (garden or otherwise), Flores suggests a process of "ecological design" in a "spiral design wheel," and OK, again I was rolling my eyes, but on the other hand ... *some* parts look good and useful. And I appreciate the way Flores incorporates her experience with Food Not Bombs and other Eugene-area activism into the narrative, not to mention the great section on "Sector C" — children. By



Why do we have lawns? Why isn't every little plot of grass feeding a family?

You won't find many gardening specifics here if that's what you're looking for, but you will find a lot of general tips. Flores does explain how to grow potatoes (I promptly took some green-grow-the-eyes taters and dumped 'em in an empty raised bed), and she does suggest some garden designs, but overall, the book is more specific about commu-

the end of my time with the book, I was no doubt just as annoying to my coworkers and friends as the book, at the beginning, was to me. "We could pry up the sidewalk in front of the Weekly and create a huge herb garden!"

Sure, they roll their eyes. But they have to admit Flores and I have a point. **EW**

BOOK NOTES: Mary Gaitskill and George Saunders speak at 7:30 pm 3/15, Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland. \$26, \$20 stu., sr., \$5 youth. William Vollman reads from *Poor People*, 7:30 pm 3/15, Powell's on Burnside, Portland. Curtis White discusses *The Spirit of Disobedience: Resisting the Charms of Fake Politics, Mindless Consumption, and the Culture of Total Work*, with screening of *Affluenza*, 3 pm 3/17, DIVA. \$10 donation (\$3 "for those living lightly"). Memorist Jodi Varon and poet essayist David Axelrod read, 7 pm 3/20, Downtown Library. Rachel Kramer Bussel discusses *He's on Top* and *She's on Top*, with contributors Stan Kent and Shanna Germain, 7:30 pm 3/26, Powell's on Hawthorne, Portland. Carolyn Forché reads, 7:30 pm 3/27, First Congregational Church, Portland. \$18, \$14 stu., sr., \$5 youth.

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