

May 29, 2013

Healthy hens: the backyard s-coop

Hankering for hens or ducks? Or, wondering what all the flap over hens is about?

North Island College's latest *Lettuce Grow* workshop takes place on Saturday, June 1 from 1 to 3 p.m. and is all about raising hens and building the appropriate coop. The workshop is geared toward those currently living in areas in Campbell River that permit keeping of urban hens.

"There are many compelling reasons for raising your own hens: eggs that are fresh, great-tasting and nutritious; chemical-free bug and weed control; an alternative to factory farms; home manufacture of the world's best fertilizer; and fun and friendly pets with personality! It's a great educational opportunity for children and adults alike," says Kira DeSorcy, lead instructor for *Lettuce Grow*.

"However, there are important considerations to make before taking on the responsibility and commitment of raising hens. Before bringing hens to their new home, planning for proper care and housing are an important first step," DeSorcy adds.

The course will cover the basics of hen care. Hens require regular daily attention, feed and clean water, and securing in their shelter at night. There are many details to consider when selecting hens and building the right home for them. For example, hens who have been factory bred may have had their beaks seared and will have grown accustomed to a specific diet. These hens will not be as adaptable to free ranging.

"A hen who has never eaten a slug is unlikely to become interested. Would you?. Whereas those that have been raised outdoors and exposed to grubs would gobble them up with great excitement and perhaps even a coo and appreciative wiggle," DeSorcy says.

To learn more about caring for your flock (or flock to be) and to connect with like-minded folk, check out this latest *Lettuce Grow* workshop this Saturday. Healthy Hens: The Backyard S-coop, expert Camille Bock will guide participants through all you need to know to get started caring for feathered friends. Bring your questions!

The workshop will be at the NIC Campbell River campus and cost is \$26. To register, visit www.nic.bc.ca/continuingeducation and search for course code GENI 8050 or visit your local campus.

Chickens and ducks are currently permitted in Campbell River in zones RU-1, RU-2 and RU-3, and on properties one acre or larger in the Quinsam Livestock Boundary. The City is in the process of drafting a bylaw that would potentially allow keeping of urban hens within city limits. This draft will be presented for Council consideration later this summer.

If you have any questions or comments on growing local food, please send them to growlocal@campbellriver.ca. Your questions will be addressed in a future Q&A article.

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