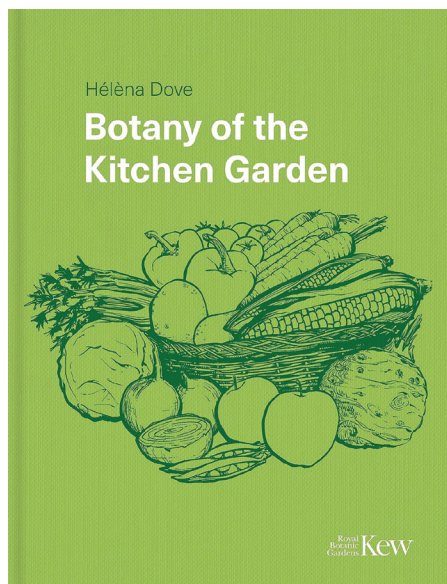


Botany of the Kitchen Garden: The Science and Horticulture of Our Favorite Crops. By Hélène Dove. 2023. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Distributed in North America by University of Chicago Press. (ISBN 978-1-84246-783-1). Hardcover. 158 pp. \$30.00.



Ever wonder where tomatoes originated, or why blueberries need soil with a low pH? *Botany of the Kitchen Garden* includes a brief history of beloved plants including the climate and country of origin. By describing the climate of origin, one can understand why each plant thrives in certain growing conditions through the lens of evolutionary biology. This catalog of garden species is interspersed with additional gardening topics such as grafting and composting. While this book is not a manual about gardening, the information contained within would be particularly useful to teachers working in a school garden and planning teachable moments from the experience.

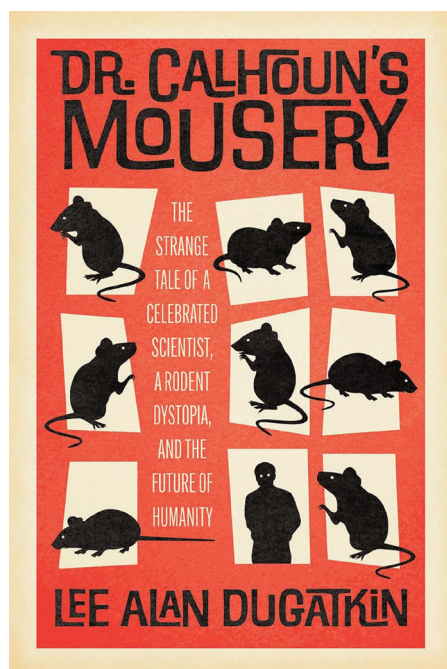
I am constantly looking to make content connections to students' lives as I teach biology, and this book will help teachers do just that. It can be used as a source about knowledge on plant adaptations and other fun facts about the fruits and vegetables students eat, as well as on the growing conditions needed for different fruits and vegetables. As an example, readers will learn why beans are legumes, information about nitrogen fixation, the botanical names of the different parts of a bean pod, and the function of the string in string beans. Botanical terminology is explained and examples are provided throughout. I'm excited that

the next time my students plant bean seeds I will be able to create a lesson richer in content.



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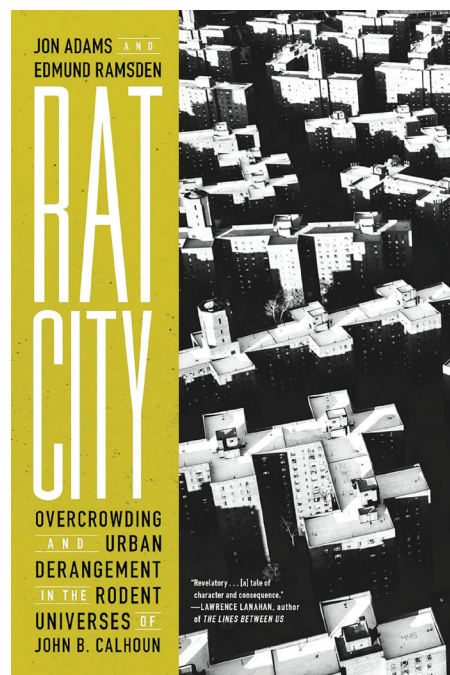
Dr. Calhoun's Mousery: The Strange Tale of a Celebrated Scientist, a Rodent Dystopia, and the Future of Humanity. By Lee Alan Dugatkin. 2024. The University of Chicago Press. (ISBN: 9780226827858). Cloth. 240 pp. \$27.50. Ebook also available.



Rat City: Overcrowding and Urban Derangement in the Rodent Universes of John B. Calhoun. By Jon Adams and Edmund Ramsden. 2024. Melville House. (ISBN: 9781685890995). Hardcover. 384 pp. \$32.50. Ebook also available.

About a decade ago, a friend was rehabilitating a wounded squirrel and asked for ideas: the squirrel had stopped eating. My personal expertise in squirrels extends only as far as an unbridled glee at seeing them pillage various neighbors' "squirrel-proof" birdfeeders, but I offered to help. The squirrel seemed healthy. The food seemed appropriate. We felt stumped.

On a whim, I removed all the food from the squirrel's serving bowl, tied some



to a string, and dangled it awkwardly out of reach. That is, I dangled the food in a position that I naively assumed would be out of reach. Within fifteen minutes, the squirrel had found a way to climb a nearby curtain, sway it purposefully, then arch its back across empty space to nab a snack. The squirrel engaged in dramatic acrobatics to obtain the exact same food it hadn't touched in the food bowl.

I found myself thinking of this squirrel while reading *Dr. Calhoun's Mousery* and *Rat City*, a pair of recently published books that both discuss the life, experiments, and legacy of biologist John Calhoun. The most famous of Calhoun's experiments featured an indoor colony of mice. With no predation and unlimited access to food and water, Calhoun wanted to determine how crowded the seventy-square-foot enclosure would get. After several generations, the mice in this colony ceased breeding; five years later, the last denizens died of old age.

From this single finding (which was contradicted by prior results from other researchers studying overpopulation in mice, and which none of Calhoun's own future experiments ever reproduced), Calhoun extrapolated a wide range of conclusions about human behavior and the dire ramifications of humanity's increasing urbanization.

Calhoun's ideas were widely celebrated in the popular press—in the late 1960s and early 1970s, journalists were eager to promulgate sweeping theories that could explain social unrest—and authors such as Tom Wolfe and Hunter S. Thompson began