

Staff //

Best Practices for Garden Food Safety



General

Review the Food and Garden Safety Checklist annually, or when there are any significant changes to the garden or staffing.

All participants must wash hands, using proper hand washing techniques, before harvesting or handling food and after being in the garden.

For Students

Students should have adult supervision at all times when in the school garden.

Students should ask permission before picking anything in the garden.

Garden educators should instruct students on how to harvest produce to preserve the plant and maintain garden safety.

Be aware of all student allergies, including food and insects. The sap, leaves, and prickly stems of certain plants, such as squash or tomatoes, can cause a rash in sensitive individuals.

Create a student-friendly list of guidelines (samples: best practices & garden rules) to review regularly.

Post guidelines in a visible location in the garden and distribute them to classroom teachers, school staff, and any adults who will be supporting the garden.

Use signs (ex. stop lights or flags) to let students know if the crops are ready to eat.

(Ex. Red = Don't Eat, Yellow = Crop is Growing, and Green = Students Can Try It)

Gardening Tools

Provide students with gardening gloves if needed. This is especially important if they are exposed to thorns or other dangerous plant or soil material.

All harvesting tools such as scissors, bowls, tubs, etc. should be food-grade and/or food service approved and designated solely for harvest and food handling. The tools should be cleaned regularly with hot water and soap and stored when fully dried.

Growing Food

No pesticides should be used in the school garden.

Create paths using wood chips, stone, or gravel, that are distinct from the growing spaces to make walking areas clear and obvious.

Review weeding, watering, and harvesting procedures with students frequently.

Food Harvesting & Delivery

School garden produce delivered to a school cafeteria should be received and inspected by food service personnel upon delivery with the same system used to receive and inspect all other incoming products.

After produce is washed and ready to be served in the cafeteria or garden, barriers such as gloves, deli paper, or appropriate utensils should be used to touch ready-to-eat produce.