

Garden Manager's Checklist

School Garden Food Safety

The purpose of this document is to help school Garden Managers create a simple, yet effective Risk Control Plan. A Risk Control Plan identifies any potential risk associated with microbial contamination that may cause foodborne illness or injury. This will need to be developed on an individual, garden-to-garden basis. Documentation of land history, soil and water tests, and composting sources needs to be in writing and made available to the Garden Manager.

The use of a Risk Control Plan for school gardens is essential and benefits students by:

- Creating a safe environment for students through the identification and management of microbial hazards associated with gardening.
- Creating a long-term, behavioral regimen that helps to increase safety and the likelihood of having a successful garden.
- Teaching how to follow policies and procedures.
- Teaching the relationship between effort and results, emphasizing success by implementing the most effective means to an end goal.

Establishing the Garden

- Locate garden(s) in an area that is away from potential contamination sources.
- Document the history of the land use.

Description prior to school: _____

Description since school: _____

- Test the soil for lead; levels are to be less than 300 ppm (*include information below and attach documentation to the back of this document*).

Date: _____ Testing Agency: _____ Lead level: _____

- Optional: test and document soil's nutrient levels.

Ca: _____ Mg: _____ Na: _____ K: _____

NO₃: _____ PO₄: _____ Salinity: _____ pH: _____

- Call 811 before you dig.
- Document any soil amendments that will be utilized.

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- Document the commercial compost source to ensure that safety standards were met.
- Ensure that school prepared compost is downslope, away from the garden, contains only plant material, and is used only on non-edible plants.
- Use non-toxic, non-leaching materials for raised bed gardens.
- Document appropriate testing of water source (*record the testing date below and attach documentation to the back of this document*).

Municipal (*yearly*) _____ Well (*once/growing season*) _____

Irrigation (*planting*, _____ *peak*, _____ & *harvest* _____)

- Coordinate with the maintenance staff to ensure they use safe practices on the school grounds near the garden; i.e. chemicals for weeds or pests are not used in the vicinity of the garden.
- Extend the school's normal security measures to the garden, such as a sign-in sheet and posting no trespassing signs.
- Secure the perimeter of the garden with fencing, to the extent that it is practical.
- Keep allergenic types of food separate from other areas of the garden.

Maintaining the Garden & the Equipment

- Manage the planting area to avoid standing water and excess debris.
- Use organic pest control methods, such as non-synthetic controls and biological controls, and document its application.

Document procedures intended to deter animals from entering the garden.

Evaluate the garden for any contamination, document, and properly remove contaminant (including soil and plant).

Monitor for and document the presence of animals, and properly remove contaminants.

Sanitize water containers on a regular basis.

Training the Workers

- All adults help supervise youth workers
- What to do when a worker is sick or has recently been sick
- Proper use of sun protection
- Need for regular hydration
- Proper hand-washing techniques and hygiene procedures
- Proper bandaging of wounds

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- Proper use of machinery (only adults operate equipment with on/off switch; youth to know how to turn off in emergency)
- Use of closed-toed shoes during harvest.
- Proper use of equipment
- Proper sanitization of equipment
- Proper harvesting procedures
- Location of designated area away from garden for eating and smoking.
- Use of single-use, non-latex, plastic gloves for harvesting
- Proper clean-up procedures for when contamination occurs
- Proper preparation and transportation of produce to cafeteria staff

Harvesting

- Complete the pre-harvest assessment.
- Coordinate with adults to oversee youth and ensure that training instructions are being followed.
- Check that restroom facilities are clean.
- Review with workers the hygiene requirements and sun protection techniques.
- Confirm that workers are not sick, have washed their hands, and are protected to work in the sun.
- Oversee inspection of shoes (closed-toed and free from contamination).
- Review with workers the harvesting methods that minimize injuring produce.
- Review with workers the emergency clean-up procedures.
- Ensure that single-use, non-latex, plastic gloves are being used for harvesting.
- Ensure that produce is placed in proper harvest containers.

Receiving of Produce by Cafeteria Staff

- Reject any produce if there are odors or evidence of contamination.
- Store produce from school garden separately from commercial produce.
- Record who, how, and where the school garden produce was harvested and cleaned.
- If possible, weigh the produce so students can document their harvest.