

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 contaminate (including soil and plant).
- Monitor for and document the presence of animals, and properly remove contaminates.
- 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.