



Arizona Department of Education

HNS# 23-2020

MEMORANDUM

To: Local Educational Agencies and Community Organizations (Sponsors) of the Summer Food Service Program

From: Melissa Conner, Associate Superintendent
Arizona Department of Education, Health and Nutrition Services Division

Original Signed

Date: April 22, 2020

Subject: Harvesting, Handling and Distributing School and Community Garden Produce During COVID-19 School Closures

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance on the harvesting, handling and distribution of school and community garden produce during the COVID-19 school closures. The guidance provided in this memo specifically addresses best practices to consider for the safety of garden caretakers and any guests of the garden. For specific food safety guidance please refer to HNS 11-2016 Safely Using Produce Grown from School Gardens in School Meal Programs.

Across Arizona's five growing climates, school and community gardens may have excess food available as spring gardens close and preparations for summer gardens move into place. For many, spring gardens are at their peak production. In response to feeding families during the Novel Coronavirus outbreak, school and community gardens can be a source of fresh food for communities with limited access otherwise. Many school or community gardens may choose to continue their gardens, may choose to harvest, handle and/or distribute garden produce throughout the shelter-in-place order. For those gardens, please consider the following when distribution along with emergency meals:

The following guidelines have been adopted from Osborn School District, Tucson Unified School District and Purdue University Cooperative Extension:

Gardening

For all garden visitors, volunteers or maintenance groups:

- Communicate to all potential audiences that they should not visit the garden if they feel ill
- Do not allow anyone with signs of illness on the site; volunteers may need to control entrance
- Leave garden gates open during hours of operation to avoid frequent contact

Page 1 of 3

Kathy Hoffman, Superintendent of Public Instruction

1535 West Jefferson Street • Phoenix Arizona 85007 • (602) 542-5460 • www.azed.gov

- Remove or cordon off public benches or picnic tables
- Limit the size of work groups to 10 people or fewer. It is recommended that this guideline be scaled down to five (5) people to fit typical school or community garden spaces that might be tight
- Stagger times for arrival and availability to reduce crowds
- Enforce social distancing guidelines of remaining at least 6 feet apart at all times
- Provide hand-washing or hand-sanitizer stations

Sanitizing Garden Equipment:

- Create and implement procedures to sanitize tools before and after garden work
- Undertake additional cleaning and sanitation protocols and recommendations, such as regular cleaning of contact surfaces (doorknobs, padlocks, water spigots, gates, etc.)
- Reminders on how to properly wash hands (i.e., thoroughly and for 20 seconds)
- Encouragement of visitors/volunteers to wash or sanitize their hands

Resources:

The Environmental Protection Agency website offers a list of EPA- registered disinfectant products for COVID-19. Always consult product label guidelines to determine if disinfectants are safe and recommended for use in a garden.

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

Harvesting

- Participants that harvest, handle or distribute school or community garden produce should keep record of harvested product, date of harvest and distribution, name of harvesters and a list (or tally) of garden guests/participants that visit the garden space
- Harvesters will consist of groups less than ten (10) people, as CDC recommended congregate guidelines suggest. It is recommended that this guideline be scaled down to five (5) people to fit typical school or community garden spaces that might be tight
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html>
- Where spaces are tight and it's hard to keep the recommended 6-foot distance, face masks are recommended during harvest, handling and distribution
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>

Handling

- Produce harvesting and handling will happen according to Arizona Department of Health Services best practices: <https://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/food-safety-environmental-services/index.php#school-garden-program-home>
- In addition to AZDHS best practices, harvesters will wash hands and wear gloves
- Produce will be distributed in clean produce bags

Distribution

- Participants will be briefed on CDC Food Safety Guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/keep-food-safe.html>
- Produce will be distributed in clean produce bags
- Verbal and/or written reminders to garden guests/ participants to wash produce will be included at distribution

- Distribution may occur in conjunction with the School Food Service "Grab and Go" meal program

Please contact ArizonaFarmtoSchool@azed.gov or your Programs Specialist at the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) with questions concerning this guidance. Your assigned specialist can be found at the top of the Sponsor application in CNPWeb. You may also send an email to SFSP@azed.gov or call 602-542-8700, and select option 1.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.