**Food Safety in School Gardens (USDA)**

School food service must ensure that all foods served to students, including food from the school garden, are safe from biological, chemical and physical hazards. Precautions should be taken for in-ground and raised bed gardens. Before using any produce from a school garden, visit the garden and ask the garden coordinator about the growing practices, including the history of the land use, water sources, soil sampling and results, use of any fertilizers, and animal control measures.

Local and State agencies may have stricter food safety policies related to allowing produce from school gardens to be used in Child Nutrition Programs. It is best to contact your local and State health department for more information. Below is a list of resources related to food safety in school gardens.

* [Food Safety Tips for School Gardens](http://nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20110822025700.pdf)
* This document was one of the training materials that was developed for USDA’s Produce Safety University. It offers guidance on site selection, composting and serving garden produce in the school meals program.
* [Food Safety in the School Garden](http://www.growit.umd.edu/YouthGardening/Garden%20and%20Food%20Safety.cfm)
* University of Maryland’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources provides information on food safety in the school garden.
* [Urban Agriculture and Improving Local, Sustainable Food Systems](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/urbanag/index.html)
* U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Urban Agriculture & Improving, Local Sustainable Food Systems website has a number of resources related to community gardens that could apply to school gardens.
* [Safety in the Garden](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/gardensafety.asp)
* The California Department of Education provides information on soil preparation, water, building materials, and harmful plants.
* [Five Steps to Food Safe School Gardening](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/LIB/sde/pdf/DEPS/Nutrition/OPmemos/10/5stepsOM1010.pdf)
* The University of Connecticut’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources provides guidance for reducing the level microorganisms through good gardening and harvesting practices in a school garden.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/implementing-farm-school-activities-food-safety>