



The Food Safety Field Guide for Garden Coordinators

The Food Safety Field Guide is adapted from the Eat What You Grow! School Garden Food Safety Manual and the USDA Food Safety Tips for School Gardens and is a convenient food safety checklist. For detailed information, please refer to your school garden food safety manual.

This Field Guide is intended for Garden Coordinators. The Garden Coordinator is responsible for the following:

- I. Ensuring all garden participants are following food safety best practices.
- II. Completing any necessary food safety documentation (e.g., Harvest Activity Log, Illness/Injury Report Form, etc.).
- III. Communicating with the Food Safety Administrator and the Food Service Manager.

Getting Started

Food Safety Training

Garden Coordinator(s) must attend and successfully complete a food safety workshop or training.

Health and Hygiene

Hand Washing and Signage

- I. Post hygiene signs where they can be clearly read.
- II. Assign a garden participant(s) to help maintain and replenish supplies at hand washing station(s).

Participant Health

- I. Do not allow anyone to work in the garden while sick, or until 48 hours after symptoms have ended, such as vomiting or diarrhea, have subsided. For illness due to Norovirus, the rule is 72 hours after symptoms have ended.
- II. Report any illness/injury to the site health office or office manager.
- III. Make sure first aid kit inventory is checked and restocked regularly.

Good Health and Hygiene Training

- I. Must make sure ALL Garden Participants are implementing Good Health and Hygiene

Practices including:

- a. Proper hand washing techniques
- b. Procedures in the event of participant illness or injury
- c. Handling of blood and bodily fluid in the garden site
- d. First aid procedures and identifying first aid kit location(s)

The Garden

Animals and Pest Control

- I. Oversee garden harvest and make sure that produce is harvested regularly and that compost or rotting vegetables are disposed of properly.

Harvesting and Post-Harvest Handling

Garden Harvest

- I. Make sure all harvesting containers are made of food grade materials that can be easily cleaned and are properly sanitized. Use Appendix C to keep track of harvest container cleaning activities.
- II. On harvest days, collect the following items:
 - a. Properly sanitized harvest and storage containers
 - b. Harvest Activity Log (Appendix C)
 - c. Scale (must also be sanitized)
- III. On harvest days, follow these procedures:
 - a. As a reminder, all participants must wash their hands before harvesting.
 - b. Harvest as early as you can in the morning.
 - c. Ideally, pick only dry fruits and vegetables.
 - d. Remove as much dirt and debris from the produce as possible in the garden site.
 - e. Never harvest any produce that has feces on it.



- f. **HANDLE WITH CARE!** Handle the produce as little as possible making sure not to bruise or damage the produce. Punctured or bruised produce are more susceptible to harmful pathogens.
- g. Produce must be kept in a shaded area of the garden and cooled immediately. This will reduce heat gain from the sun.

Post-Harvest Handling

- I. Monitor the temperature of harvested produce.
- II. Ensure these procedures are followed:
- III. Sanitize all processing areas (e.g., sorting area, food contact surfaces, and scales) and produce storage boxes (e.g., coolers, wax boxes, or storage bins) using a foodservice approved sanitizer and preferably one that is non-toxic and environmentally safe. Cleaning these areas and items should be done on a daily basis or as necessary and should only be sanitized in the school cafeteria, NOT in the garden.
- IV. Containers used for harvesting should be labeled “UNWASHED PRODUCE.” In addition, include PRODUCE NAME, HARVEST DATE, ROW/BED/or PLOT on the container label. This will help identify where the produce came from.
- V. Do not use compost containers for storing produce, even temporarily.
- VI. Please note, at harvest and/or in the garden, produce must NOT be rinsed or washed. Produce washing should ONLY take place in the school kitchen. The foodservice staff will wash produce following the proper foodservice handling procedures.
- I. You should communicate with your Foodservice Manager to make sure they approve receiving produce that may have excessive dirt such as root vegetables. If produce contains excessive dirt such as root vegetables or leafy greens, simply wipe off dirt with clean paper towels or shake off debris. Do NOT use wet rags or paper towels to wipe off produce.

Steps to Cooling Produce

- I. If it is not possible to move the harvested produce to a refrigerated area within one hour of harvest, place produce in cooler with ice.
- II. All cooling equipment should be sanitized before storing produce.
- III. Before placing the cooler in refrigerated storage, the ice should be removed.
- IV. Bacteria can grow on produce that is stored at above 40 degrees; so, all produce should be stored in refrigerators and not left out overnight. Otherwise, this produce needs to be discarded.

Transporting Produce (if applicable)

- Whenever produce is shipped, record its temperature in a log.

Foodservice Handling

Garden Produce Post-Harvest Handling

- I. Develop an organized labeling system with the Food Service Manager to identify garden produce.
- II. Make sure excess dirt is removed.

