



Garden Food Safety Tips

Fruits and vegetables are popular crops grown in community and home gardens. Fruits and vegetables eaten fresh without cooking should be managed with extra care to minimize contamination throughout the growing season and during harvesting. Contamination is the introduction of harmful microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites onto fresh produce. If there are harmful microorganisms in fresh products that are consumed without cooking, there is a risk of becoming ill and experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, etc.

Potential sources of contamination in the garden include soil amendments such as raw manure added to soil when fresh produce is present, contaminated water used for irrigation and washing of fresh produce, animals such as wildlife and pets, equipment such as tools and harvest containers, people, and flooding. Gardeners can implement the tips below to help reduce contamination of fresh produce when growing and harvesting fresh produce for home consumption or donation.

When growing	When harvesting
Minimize the use of raw manure as a soil amendment. Treated compost is a safer choice.	Wash hands with clean water and soap before harvesting.
When applying compost, do not let it touch the harvestable part of the crop.	Do not harvest fresh produce if you are sick with diarrhea, vomiting, or have jaundice.
The tools used to apply compost should be cleaned after use.	Use clean tools and containers to harvest produce.
Water used for irrigation should be from a safer source, well water or municipal water.	Wait at least three days between the last water application and harvest.
Minimize splashing of soil onto the produce when watering.	Harvest fresh produce when the leaves are dry. When irrigating crops, do it after harvest.
Discourage animal and wildlife access to gardens.	Do not harvest produce that has animal feces or bird droppings.
Plant fresh produce in areas less prone to flooding.	Minimize damage to the plant and produce during harvest.
If a plot happens to flood, evaluate if the edible part of the plant has contacted flood waters.	Harvested produce should not be placed directly on the ground.
All food that has come into contact with flood water cannot be eaten or fed to animals due to chemicals and harmful microorganisms that may be present in flood water.	

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Copy the link below or scan the QR code to learn more about food safety from University of Illinois Extension.

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go.illinois.edu/Food-Safety

