

Food Safety Education Program

Donation and School Garden Produce Safety Guidelines

A Checklist to Minimize Food Safety Risks

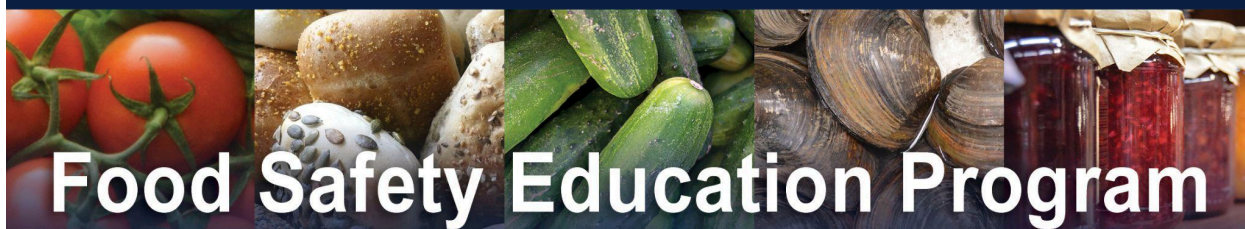
People and animals present in gardens can carry, introduce and spread microbial pathogens to fresh produce. The presence of these pathogens on fresh fruits and vegetables can lead to human illnesses, especially when these foods are consumed raw. This self-auditing checklist is designed to help reduce risk when growing fresh fruits and vegetables.

Garden Name and Location: _____
Checklist Completed By: _____
Date Completed: _____

This checklist should be used at least once before the season and at least once during the season. Review the checklist whenever a new volunteer joins a garden team. The idea is to check 'yes' to all situations below.

Training and Educational Suggestions

1. Garden workers are aware of food safety risks and have received training by:
 - a. Attending the URI Master Gardener Core Training - [Food Safety](#), [Composting lecture](#) and/or watching the recording. (For URI Master Gardeners Only)-OR-
 2. Garden workers have reviewed URI's [Five Steps to Food Safe Fruit and Vegetable Gardening](#)
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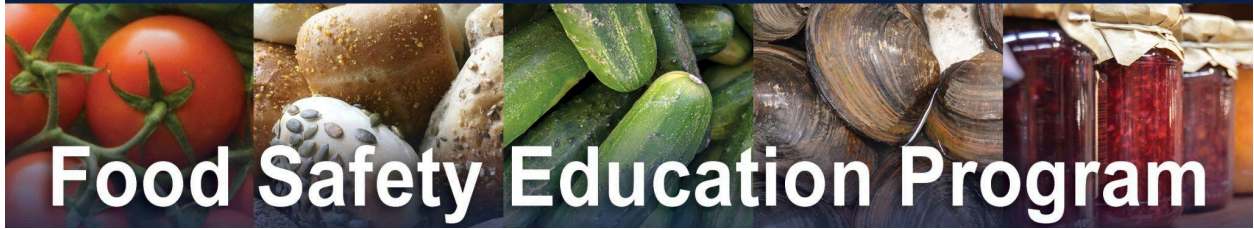
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Personal Health and Hygiene

1. Restrooms and hand-washing stations facilities are available for garden workers OR they can be accessed in under ten minutes. YES, NO, N/A
2. Garden workers start out in clean clothes and shoes/boots. YES, NO, N/A
3. Garden workers do not smoke or eat in the garden or while packing harvest. YES, NO, N/A
4. Garden workers wash hands with **soap and water** when: YES, NO, N/A
 - a. Hands become contaminated after touching anything that could contaminate the harvest (i.e. from sneezing, rubbing nose, touching eyes)
 - b. A task is interrupted (i.e. answering the phone, going from picking to turning compost).
 - c. After using the bathroom.
 - d. Before and after eating food or drinking.
 - e. Before and after treating a wound or a cut.
 - f. After touching garbage.
5. Garden workers cover open wounds with a clean bandage. YES, NO, N/A
6. Garden workers who are sick are instructed to stay home or are excused. YES, NO, N/A

Garden Location and Soil Amendments

1. Gardens are located as far as possible from compost piles and other types of soil amendments. YES, NO, N/A
2. Gardens are located as far as possible from domestic animals' dwellings (i.e. chicken coops). YES, NO, N/A



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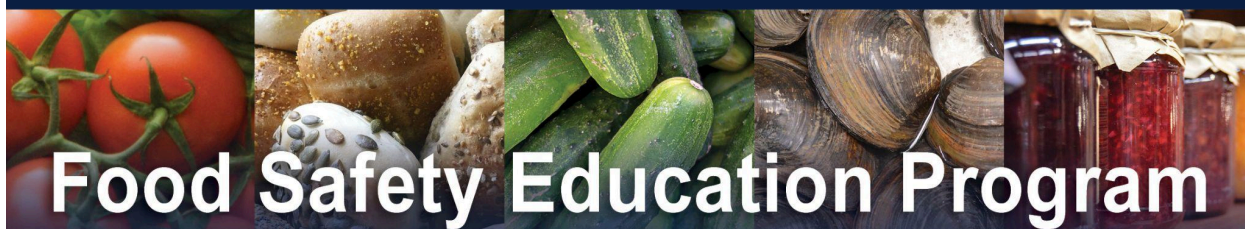
3. Only properly treated soil amendments are used (i.e. finished compost, fertilizer). YES, NO, N/A
 4. Manure is **not** allowed for direct use in the garden OR as a component in compost piles. YES, NO, N/A
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Animals, Wild and Domestic (Pets)

1. Gardens are monitored regularly for animal intrusion and fecal matter AND just prior to harvest activities. YES, NO, N/A
 2. Animals are not allowed in active growing areas. YES, NO, N/A
 3. Gardens are protected from animals and/or practices are in place to discourage intrusion. YES, NO, N/A
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Water Sources

1. If using a well, water is tested at least once, for generic coliform, prior to the gardening season (water tests should not exceed 126/cfu/100ml of generic coliform). YES, NO, N/A
2. If using municipal/town water, the garden manager is staying informed of local water supplies being contaminated; and a backup plan is in place should watering need to happen. YES, NO, N/A
3. Surface water (i.e. ponds, rivers, streams) and discharge water from handwashing station buckets are not used in the garden under any circumstance. YES, NO, N/A



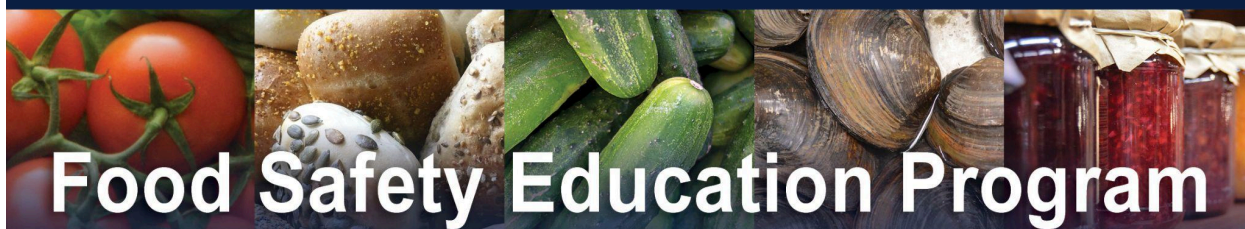
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4. Rain barrel water collected from rooftops is not used unless best practices including sanitizing the barrel before use, monitoring/treating water regularly and avoiding watering the edible portion of the crop are employed. See this [Rutgers resource](#) for more information. YES, NO, N/A

Harvesting and Packing Activities

1. Garden workers are required to wash their hands prior to harvesting. YES, NO, N/A
2. Harvest containers are food-grade compliant, easily cleanable and are in good condition. YES, NO, N/A
3. Harvest containers are stored upside down (when not in use) and at least 6 inches off the ground (pallets are acceptable). YES, NO, N/A
4. If a storage area exists for harvesting totes, they are stored off the ground and a pest control system is in place (i.e. mouse traps). YES, NO, N/A
5. Packing of fruits and vegetables into plastic bags must be food-grade and only used once. YES, NO, N/A
6. Packing of harvest into cardboard boxes must be brand new or lined with food-grade plastic liners. YES, NO, N/A
7. Harvest bins containing produce are not stored directly on the ground. YES, NO, N/A
8. Unused and new packing containers are protected from contamination. YES, NO, N/A
9. If a storage area exists for post-harvest bags and boxes, they are stored off the ground and a pest control system is in place (i.e. mouse traps). YES, NO, N/A



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10. Cutting of produce is not allowed (i.e. splitting a melon) unless it is considered normal farming/gardening activity (removing tops of onions). YES, NO, N/A

Equipment, Tools and Sanitation*

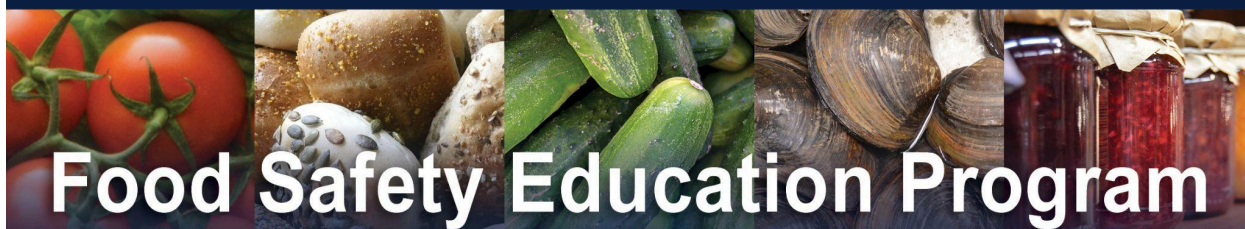
1. Food contact surfaces, tools and harvest bins are cleaned and sanitized (with an approved food-grade sanitizer) at the beginning of the season. YES, NO, N/A
2. Food contact surfaces, tools and bins are cleaned with soap and water prior to harvest and sanitized as necessary (i.e. bird droppings found on harvest bins). YES, NO, N/A

Transportation

1. Gardeners loading and transporting produce practice good personal hygiene and wash their hands prior to start. YES, NO, N/A
2. Vehicles used to transport fresh produce to donation sites are well maintained and clean. YES, NO, N/A
3. Domestic animals are not allowed in vehicles transporting fresh produce to donation sites at the same time. YES, NO, N/A

****Additional Information on Sanitizing***

Cleaning, disinfecting and drying. Surfaces, tools and equipment used in the garden should be cleaned with soap and water regularly and then sanitized whenever possible. Surfaces include tables, handles, knobs, bins, buckets, shared garden tools, etc.



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- **How to Clean and Sanitize:**
 - Soap, water and sanitizers, like household bleach, are the best agents to kill pathogens.
 - If a surface is visibly dirty, wash first with soap and water and then wipe down with sanitizer. Leave the solution on the surface/tool for at least 1 minute. Use paper towels and dispose of them properly after each use.
 - Cleaning with soap and water reduces the number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface. Sanitizing kills germs on surfaces.
 - Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Leave solution on the surface for at least 1 minute.
- **Additional Information:**
 - Bleach solutions will be effective for disinfection up to 24 hours.
 - Check the label to see if your bleach is intended for disinfection and has a sodium hypochlorite concentration of 5%–6% and is unscented. Ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Some bleaches, such as those designed for safe use on colored clothing or for whitening, may not be suitable for disinfection.