



University of California
Cooperative Extension
Tulare County

Agriculture and Natural Resources



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FOOD SAFETY CONCERNS FOR EDIBLE LANDSCAPE AND HOME GARDENING

The majority of fresh consumed fruits and vegetables in the United States are wholesome and free of microorganisms that could result in illness. In addition, many fruits and vegetables have natural barriers, like skins and rinds to protect them. However, the home garden and edible landscape environments are not free from concerns for contamination by bacteria and other pathogens that can make you and your family sick. Food safety awareness is the essential tool for designing and implementing home garden practices to prevent foodborne illness.

The diversity and scale of home garden environments, gardening practices and food handling practices make a single approach to food safety planning in the garden unrealistic. Minimize the chance of external and internal contamination of food produced in the home garden and edible landscape environments by keeping some principles in mind when planning your home garden.

- Become familiar with the quality of water used for gardening or edible landscape management.
- Ensure that home wells are designed and maintained in a manner that prevent surface runoff or soil infiltration from contaminating the water supply.
- Use watering methods that minimize contact between the water and the edible parts of the plant.
- Become informed about proper home compost management for pathogen reduction, especially when using animal manure.
- Maximize the time between application of animal manure to garden areas and harvest of edible crops.

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- Gardening practices that use manure slurries or manure teas for pest control and foliar nutrients on any landscape or garden plant should be carefully evaluated for how likely the practice is to result in direct or indirect contamination of edible crops.
- Be aware of the potential for garden gloves to transfer contamination from one place to produce.
- Clean all food contact surfaces and harvest containers prior to use.
- Minimize the attraction of animals and pests to harvest buckets kept in the garden or storage shed.
- Cut away decayed or damaged areas at least 1 inch beyond the edge of the defect for produce consumed immediately or promptly refrigerated.
- Remove potential contaminants by washing produce with a vegetable brush under running tap water.

For more information, contact your University of California Cooperative Extension Office for “Key Points of Control and Management of Microbial Food Safety Concerns for Edible Landscape and Home Gardening.”

Source: University of California Cooperative Extension Office for, “Key Points of Control and Management of Microbial Food Safety Concerns for Edible Landscape and Home Gardening.”

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