



# Food Safety

# Fact Sheet

September 2010

## Food Safety and School Gardens

### Introduction

“Grow it, know it, try it ... love it!” a phrase coined by the National Gardening Association describes the national effort to get children interested in gardening and excited about consuming fruits and vegetables. School gardens provide a wonderful opportunity for a magnitude of learning experiences. Teachers are incorporating interdisciplinary gardening lessons for subjects such as science, math, social studies, and English. One important subject that cannot be overlooked is food safety during planting, harvesting, and preparation of the foods that are consumed.

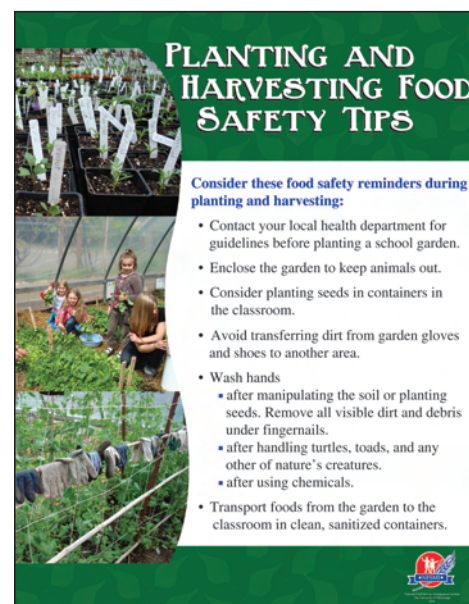
### Here Are the Facts

Foodborne illness outbreaks related to the consumption of fresh produce have gained national media attention. This publicity may generate some food safety concerns from school officials. School nutrition professionals can provide valuable information on ways to prevent foodborne illness and should lend their expertise during interdisciplinary lessons in the classroom.

### Application

Here are some food safety reminders to consider during planting and harvesting:

- Discuss your intent with the local health department. The health department can evaluate the safety of the water supply and the possibility of run-off contamination from the adjacent land.



Planting and Harvesting Food Safety Tips, (2010).



## Application, continued

- Create a garden to keep animals out by concealing the area with a fence.
- Consider planting seeds in containers and keeping the containers in the classroom during the growing period.
- Avoid cross-contamination. Be aware of the possibility of transferring dirt from garden gloves and shoes to another area.
- Wash hands after manipulating the soil or planting seeds. Pay close attention to the dirt under fingernails and wash hands to remove all visible debris.
- Wash hands after handling turtles, toads, and any other of nature's creatures.
- Wash hands after using chemicals.
- Transport foods from the garden to the classroom in clean, sanitized containers.

Here are some classroom food safety tips for preparing garden-fresh foods:

- Wash hands before cutting, preparing, or eating fruits or vegetables.
- Use clean, sanitized, and dry cutting boards and utensils.
- Wash produce under running water.
- Do not allow sick children to prepare foods for other children.



Preparing Garden-Fresh Foods in the Classroom, (2010).

**Remember, follow state or local health department requirements.**

## References

- National Environmental Health Association. (n.d.). *Foodborne illness what you can't see can harm you*. Denver, CO: Author. Available online at [www.neha.org/childrens\\_eh/ppt/Food%20Bourne%20%201-29.ppt](http://www.neha.org/childrens_eh/ppt/Food%20Bourne%20%201-29.ppt)
- The David Brower Center. (2009). *The center for ecoliteracy*. Berkeley, CA: Author. Available online at [www.ecoliteracy.org](http://www.ecoliteracy.org)
- The National Gardening Association. (2009). *Safety first*. South Burlington, VT: Author. Available online at [www.kidsgardening.com/Dig/digdetail.taf?Type=Art&id=2263](http://www.kidsgardening.com/Dig/digdetail.taf?Type=Art&id=2263)
- University of California, Davis Agriculture and Natural Resources. (2002). *Good agricultural practices*. Davis, CA: Author. Available online at <http://ucgaps.ucdavis.edu>
- Western Institute for Food Safety and Security University of California, Davis. (July, 2008). *Food safety tips for your home garden*. Davis, CA: Author. Available online at <http://vric.ucdavis.edu/selectnewtopic.garden.htm>

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through a grant agreement with The University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA Employer.

**For more information, contact NFSMI at 800-321-3054 or [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org).**