



NEWS RELEASE

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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. However, the home garden and edible landscape environments are not free from concerns for contamination by human pathogens. Food safety awareness is the essential tool for designing and implementing home garden practices to prevent foodborne illness.

Contamination by microbial pathogens can only result from an external environmental source at some point from production to food preparation. 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 principals in mind when planning your home garden.

- Become familiar with the seasonal quality of any surface water sources used for gardening or edible landscape management.
- Ensure that home wells are designed and maintained in a manner that prevent surface run-off or soil infiltration from contaminating the water supply.
- Use irrigation 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 any animal manure.
- Maximize the time between application of animal manure to garden areas and harvest of edible crops.
- 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 vectors 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 is generally effective for produce consumed immediately or promptly refrigerated.
- Mechanical removal of potential contaminants by brush washing under running tap water is the recommended home practice.

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.”

Referenced from: Susan Donohue, UCCE Butte County