

Safer Practices for Community Gardens and Agriculture

Always learn as much as you can about the previous uses of your project site, and take these previous uses into consideration when developing a garden plan.

Common sources of contamination include paint (manufactured before 1978), high traffic areas, treated lumber, burning waste, contaminated manure, coal ash, sewage sludge, petroleum spills, pesticides, and commercial / industrial use sites. Sometimes these contaminants are found in the soil near their sources.

You can be exposed to different contaminants in different ways but some of the most common include breathing in the contaminant, eating or drinking the contaminant or food that has come in contact with the skin.

Contaminants can negatively affect your health in a multitude of ways. Remember, it is important to avoid exposure to possible contaminants in your environment to keep your family safe.



Grow crops in raised beds using clean soil and lots of organic material.

Use raised beds, they can be filled with a higher quality soil which will help increase yields at the garden.

A proper water permeable barrier can be used to lessen exposure to the soil below the bed.





Always wash your fruits and vegetables before eating and teach children to do the same.

Try not to track dirt from the garden into your home.



For More Information:

Brownfields, E. P. A. Urban Agriculture: Interim Guidelines for Safe Gardening Practices. Chicago, IL: Region 5 Superfund Division, US Environmental Protection Agency (Summer 2011).

<http://bit.ly/4qpPiTN>

Evaluation of Background Metal Contaminants in Ohio Soils. Cox-Colvin & Associates. 1996.

<https://bit.ly/3WSIOKK>

Reusing potentially contaminated landscapes: Growing gardens in urban soils. Washington, DC: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation. (2011).

<http://bit.ly/2MalNWU>

Toxicological profile for lead Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). (2007).

<http://bit.ly/2OTZh2d>



Wear gloves while gardening and wash your hands when you are done, especially before you eat.



Avoid planting food gardens by old painted structures.

Cover bare soil and walkways with mulch, landscape fabric, stones, or bricks.

Plant food gardens away from driveways and high traffic areas.

Work to maintain a neutral soil pH to help prevent the absorption of contaminants in plants.



Contaminants such as arsenic can be naturally occurring in the soils found in Ohio.