

Safer Practices for Community Greening Projects

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 plan for community green space.

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.



Avoid watering and weeding by old painted structures where lead contaminants may be present.



Avoid planting any landscaping that will require constant maintenance.

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.



Wear gloves while working in the soil and wash your hands when you are done, especially before you eat.



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>

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



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

Structures near a demolition may collect dust on them that contains contaminants.

If a demolition occurs near your community project, please take care to clean all structures after.

Plant food gardens away from roads and driveways.



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

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

