

Resources

More information on food safety, nutrition, and other related topics can be found online at:

Center for Health & Hygiene in the Home and Community

www.simmons.edu/hygieneandhealth

EPA: <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/urbanag/steps.htm>

University of Massachusetts Extension Service provides soil testing in Massachusetts:

<http://soiltest.umass.edu/>

USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map:

<http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/>

Farmer's Almanac: <http://www.almanac.com/content/vegetable-garden-planner>



Center for Health & Hygiene In Home & Community

The Center for Health and Hygiene in Home and Community serves as a national and international resource for information and education, applied research, professional training and conferences. The Center focuses on issues relating to hygiene and infection control in areas such as:

- consumer food safety
- home hygiene
- daycare
- preschool
- homecare
- sports and leisure activity
- travel and hospitality

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Center for Health & Hygiene In Home & Community

Safety Tips for Edible Urban Gardening



April 2015



Starting your spring planting may be a daunting task for a new gardener, especially in the city. Here are some easy tips to ensure your garden is healthy, happy and productive!

Tip 1: Survey the Soil

In urban environments, there may be pollutants such as heavy metals in the soil. It is important to test the soil in your desired growing space to determine if the soil is safe for planting.

- Take soil from a variety of locations to ensure that all sections that you may want to plant in will be tested.
- Place all samples in one container and sends to a soil testing program. Soils can be tested by your local state university extension office.
- The scientists will test for any pollutants and return results to you for a small fee.

If your soil is too polluted, build or purchase containers to plant in and fill them with potting soil. If your project is large—like a community garden—consider contacting the EPA for cleanup assistance.



Tip 2: Air Quality Checks

In heavily trafficked areas there may be additional pollutants in the air.



Always consider locations for gardening that are not in direct line of vehicle exhaust (i.e. balcony instead of the first floor, or the roof).

EATING Homegrown Produce

Always wash your produce well after the harvest using clean running water and a scrubbing brush for root vegetables. You can also use a vegetable spray as a second step. This is a good start, but it will not remove all sources of contamination—for example, heavy metals that are in the soil and get inside the produce or some pathogenic bacteria that attach themselves to the outer surfaces of plants.

Fecal pathogens from dogs, cats, and some birds can contaminate your soil, your produce, and your hands. Try to keep your garden space free of feces from these animals. However, manure is still a great choice for fertilizing—look for composted or treated manure to minimize concern.

Always wash your hands with soap and water after working in the garden or harvesting your produce. An up-to-date tetanus vaccination is another important way to prevent injuries from becoming infected with disease-causing bacteria in the garden.

Tip 3: Understand Your Soil's Strengths

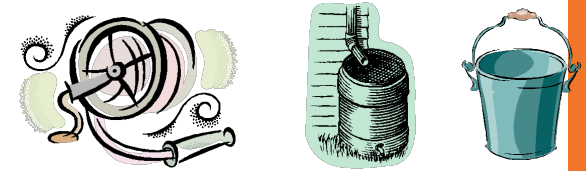
Most plants prefer slightly acidic soil (pH < 7), but if the soil is too basic or too acidic, certain plants may not survive.

Is your soil too alkaline or too acidic? This is an easy fix: you can either add supplements (organic fertilizer or compost) to the soil to correct this problem, or plant things that need that particular type of soil. For example, potatoes prefer more acidic soils. There is an excellent list of the pH preferences of different vegetables found here: <http://www.agiweb.org/education/aap/invest/PreferencesforpH.pdf>



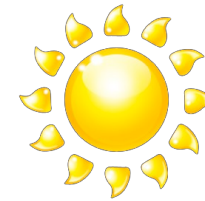
Tip 4: Where's the Water?

Plants need access to a lot of fresh water. How are you planning on watering your plants?



Are you busy? Consider a timer for your water source (\$20-\$50). Your garden needs more water to thrive than you might expect!

Tip 5: Know Your Crops



Be sure to check your garden space for access to sunlight. Most plants need at least half a day's sunlight to survive, and some need much more.

If your garden is mostly shaded, there are plenty of low-light plants that you can still grow! Low-light gardens take less time to care for because they are better at retaining water.

Check the USDA's plant hardiness zones. This map will show you the extreme temperatures for your city. Based on this map, you will be able to determine what plants will do well in your garden.

Each plant has a favorite season. For example, lettuce will be happier in the cooler seasons (spring and fall), and in lower light gardens throughout the summer. The Farmer's Almanac has a useful chart for planning out your garden for the year. Remember that this timetable may vary depending on what zone you live in.