

**Bringing School Garden Produce into the Cafeteria**

This document summarizes food safety protocols and best practices for bringing school garden produce into the cafeteria. The produce from school gardens can contribute to lunches, classroom lessons, after school programs and taste testing events. The following practices are intended to provide basic training guidelines for those involved with the school garden and produce.

**Harvesting**

Anyone involved with harvesting, such as the garden coordinator, staff or volunteers, should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds prior to harvesting. All harvesting tools should be designated solely for food harvest and handling. These tools should be cleaned regularly with hot water and sanitizer. Harvesting containers must be easily cleanable, non-porous and designated for the gardens’ produce.

All fruits and vegetables must be rinsed thoroughly and free of soil. Pre-washing should be done within the garden before delivery to the kitchen or classrooms.

# **Food Safety**

Everyone involved with preparing, cooking and serving food to the public must have a current food handler’s card. This inexpensive course can be found at [www.orfoodhandlers.com](https://www.orfoodhandlers.com/eMain.aspx) and is valid for three years.

The garden coordinator, kitchen staff, food service director, principal and other key stakeholders should have a common understanding and agree to all things relating to the garden. A meeting at the beginning of each school year is highly recommended to keep all stakeholders informed and up to date with any changes.

**Preparing**

Once pre-washed produce has been delivered to the kitchen, it should be washed again according to the same standards in place for conventional produce. If the kitchen staff would like assistance, the garden coordinator can help wash and prepare the produce to serve in school meals. These arrangements should be made clear between the kitchen staff and garden coordinator to ensure proper use of produce. If the produce is prepped for another day, proper food handling procedures such as labeling and storing must be followed.

# **Eating Out of the Garden**

Only produce that is not in direct ground contact (tomatoes, kale, etc.) and shows no signs of soil or contamination may be eaten in the garden (“grazing”). Produce that has previously fallen to the ground (dropped off the plant) should not be eaten. Only the garden coordinator or responsible adult should decide what is safe to eat and give permission prior to picking off the plant.