



May 18, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

The Alameda County Department of Environmental Health and the Agricultural Commissioner's office recognize that consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, or healthy eating practices, promotes fundamental good health. To this end, the Agricultural Commissioner and the Director of Environmental Health encourage those that grow and those that consume produce from community gardens or school based gardens to value the following guidelines for the production, distribution and consumption of fruits and vegetables.

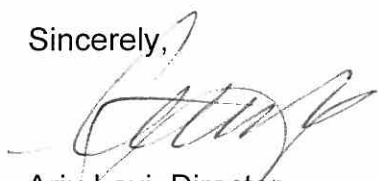
- Select an area that is under your control at all times.
- Consider the past uses of proposed garden areas in order to minimize the potential for contaminants in the soil that could affect the wholesomeness of the produce. Obtain soil used for raised beds from approved sources only.
- Fence your vegetable beds to avoid entry of small animals.
- Verify that the water used for irrigation of the vegetable garden is from an approved municipal source. Gray water may not be used for edible plants
- Use only properly composted manure.
- Maximize the time between application of manure and harvesting of crops to reduce the possibility of microbial contamination.
- Keep domestic animals and or pets away from the growing area.
- Minimize vegetation at the edge of the vegetable growing beds.
- Minimize the presence of vector attractants such as piles of decaying fruits or vegetables.
- Follow all laws and regulations pertaining to the use and safety of pesticides whenever they are used at the gardens. Check with school administration regarding compliance with the pesticide use notification/reporting under the Healthy School Act.
- Contact the County Agricultural Commissioners' office if you plan to participate at a certified farmers market.
- Always beware that transporting produce may also transport unwanted pests from one location to another. Check with County Agricultural Commissioner's office regarding movement of produce and or fruits outside the county.
- Plan harvest time to avoid problems with harvest and storage of produce.
- Clean all food contact surface and harvest containers or bins prior to use.
- Clean all harvest equipments thoroughly before and after use. Change gloves and wash hands frequently to avoid possible cross contamination.
- Designate proper storage area to store harvested produce.
- Wash all produce thoroughly under running water to eliminate microbial contamination.
- Refrigerate produce to maintain the food quality and safety.
- Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before handling ready to eat produce and vegetables.
- Always sanitize knives, cutting boards and other food contact surface before cutting fruits or produce.

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There is no substitute for being fully aware of the importance of personal hygiene and safe food practices in the prevention of food borne disease. Every garden should have among its protectors participants educated in safe food handling procedures. Classes are available from multiple sources ranging from community college to private vendors to the Environmental Health Department.

Fruits and vegetables harvested and sold to the general public is a regulated enterprise. If your garden is engaged in or considering an aspect of commerce, you may require an Environmental Health Permit. Please contact Environmental Health Department at 510-567-6700 with your questions or request for permit. Please note that permits and inspections are fee-based services.

Sincerely,



Ariu Levi, Director
Department of Environmental Health



Dennis Bray, Deputy Director
Community Development Agency
Agriculture/Weights & Measures

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