

# Fresh, Healthy, and Safe

## Best Practices for Growing and Using Produce Grown in Hawai'i School Gardens Grades 9-12

School Gardens serve as exciting living laboratories for learning and are an important component of Farm to School programs. The produce may be sold or eaten and shared with students, their families, and the community. The following are basic food safety guidelines for everyone who works in a School Garden.

### Growing Practices: Garden Care and Maintenance

- Use only clean potable water. If unsure, or have only catchment water, test your water source.
- Use compost to nourish soil. Create a composting program that recycles garden waste, weeds, grass clippings and leaves from your campus.
- Start a worm box and use worm compost to make tea that will nourish soil.
- Sheet mulching builds soil fertility - soil mulch preserves water and discourages weed growth.
- Do not use synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers.
- Use high quality seeds: organic/non-GMO, from "Safe Seed Pledge" companies, or saved from last harvest.
- All organic matter including manure should be fully composted in aerobic conditions prior to application.
- Test your soil for contaminants if unsure of its source.
- Use non-toxic materials for raised beds, containers, stakes or trellises. Do not use pressure treated wood, used tires, or single use plastic.
- Select non-allergenic and non-toxic plants.

### Food Safety Supplies

- Clean sink for washing hands and produce
- Potable water
- Pump soap
- Veggie scrub brushes
- Trash can with lid
- Disposable gloves may be used for food preparation
- First Aid Kit

### Personal Protection for Students

- Access to drinking water
- Sunscreen available
- Sun hats are recommended
- Closed shoes are recommended
- Access to a shady area where students can rest

### "Aloha 'Aina and a Respectful Attitude"

- Work as a community: share responsibilities and rewards
- Give thanks
- Give to those in need
- Demonstrate your respect for living and non-living things

### Harvesting and Handling of Garden Produce

- Students, staff, parents and volunteers involved in the harvest must wash their hands with soap before and after harvesting.
- Anyone with open cuts, wounds, or sick should not harvest until healed.
- Disposable or clean gloves may be used for harvesting.
- Please don't eat while harvesting.
- All harvest tools, scissors, bowls, containers or tubs should be food grade and designated solely for harvest and food handling.
- Brush or shake off excess soil before placing in harvest container.
- Tools and containers should be cleaned, dried, and stored properly after use.
- Select non-allergenic and non-toxic plants.

### Food Preparation and Storage of Garden Produce

- Always wash hands with soap before preparing food.
- Use only clean potable water.
- Compost damaged produce.
- Use a clean scrub brush and clean hands to wash produce.
- Knives, cutting boards, bowls, and containers should be food grade.
- Produce should be eaten immediately or refrigerated as necessary.

### Tool Safety and Care

- Age appropriate and supervised tool use
- Tools cleaned with hose and/or brush after use
- Tools stored in a locked shed
- Work gloves provided for heavy jobs

### Animals in the Garden

- Animals should be housed down-slope from garden area to avoid runoff into food growing areas.
- Livestock and pets should be kept out of the garden.

### Soil and Water Testing

- *Testing Your Soil:*  
*Why and How to Take a Soil-Test Sample*  
[www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/AS-4.pdf](http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/AS-4.pdf)
- *Testing Your Water:*  
*Water Testing Services UH Mānoa*  
[www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/hawaiirain/test.html](http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/hawaiirain/test.html)