



Washing Local Foods at Early Care and Education Sites

When using local foods from the garden, a farmers' market, or a local producer, follow these food safety tips.

Step 1: Wash Hands for 20 seconds with warm water and soap before and after preparing fresh produce.

Step 2: Trim Produce and Separate

- Remove leaves and cut off ends you are not using.
- Cut damaged and bruised areas away.
- Put discarded parts in a bowl to add to the compost pile- see composting handout.

Step 3: Wash and Scrub Produce

- Rinse in cold water so dirt and bacteria are not transferred from the knife
- Use a brush to scrub firm produce
- Dry with a clean cloth or paper towel

Step 4: Limit Hand Contact by using spatulas, tongs, wax paper, or other kitchen tools.

Step 5: Clean Cutting Boards and Utensils with warm, soapy water after every use.

Step 6: Store prepared fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator within 2 hours.

Step 7: When in doubt, throw it out.



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Time-Temperature Controlled For Safety (TCS) Produce

TCS produce are fruits and vegetables that must be kept out of the temperature danger zone, 41 – 135°F, to prevent the growth of pathogens (disease-causing bacteria).

Store TCS produce at or below 41°F to keep them safe:

- Cut lettuce
- Cut melons – watermelon, honeydew, and cantaloupe
- Cut tomatoes
- Raw seed groups – bean and alfalfa
- Cooked vegetables or fruits



Teachable Moments

1. **Cognition and General Knowledge (Mathematics)** – Have children count to 20 as they wash their hands before handling any food.
2. **Social and Emotional Development (Self)** – Build children's confidence in their abilities to wash produce from their gardens. Provide child-sized tools (small sink, step stool, colander, etc.) so the children can participate as much as possible.

This information represents best practices for all early learning providers. Appropriate licensing requirements should always be followed in your early learning program. Be sure to check with your licensing agent and/or food program specialist.

For questions on gardening and nutrition education, contact your local Ohio State University Extension office (extension.osu.edu/lao) or Central State University Extension Office (centralstate.edu/csuetension).

For more tips on gardening and cooking in the classroom visit farmtoschool.osu.edu/farm-to-early-care.

Developed by The Ohio Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition.

In collaboration with

**Ohio Department of Education
Ohio Department of Health
Ohio Department of Job & Family Services**

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Composting at Early Care and Education Sites

Composting can reduce the amount of waste going to the landfill and enrich soil for growing fruits and vegetables. Take these steps to start composting at your site.

Step 1: Check the Ohio EPA website for Ohio composting rules, epa.ohio.gov

Step 2: Get approval from your administrator or leadership.

Step 3: Find a location close to the garden but away from foot traffic.

Step 4: Add green and brown materials, these break down and create an opportunity for children to identify pieces and parts of these materials. Balance compost by adding about half brown and half green materials.

Step 5: Secure compost from pests

Place a cover over the compost pile to keep larger mammals and birds out of it. If possible, the cover can be permeable such as a hardware cloth.



What CAN be composted

- Powerful organic matter
- Brown = leaves, shredded paper (no wax), small stems, lawn clippings, weeds (no seed heads or diseased plants)
- Greens = almost every kitchen scrap – potato peels, coffee grounds, eggshells
- Note: the larger the particle, the more time it will take to break down

What CAN'T be composted

NO: oils, fats, meat, bones, pet litter. The pile might attract animals – ideally the pile will be secured.



Teachable Moments

1. **Cognitive/General Knowledge:**
When adding to the compost pile, encourage the children to practice grouping and categorizing as they sort and classify brown and green compost materials.
2. **Cognitive/General Knowledge:**
Have children record observations using words, pictures, charts, or graphs of how the compost pile changes over time in their own observation journals.



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For more tips on gardening and cooking in the classroom visit farmtoschool.osu.edu/farm-to-early-care. Visit Ohioline for additional materials on composting at ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/hyg-1189-99.

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Starting a Garden at an Early Care and Education Site

Gardens offer opportunities for hands-on learning, family engagement, and life-long health for children, families, and educators. In order to create and keep up a garden, it's important to have a plan. Follow these steps to create your own garden plan.

Step 1: Identify Funding, Resources and Support:

- **Establish the amount of funding** you have available to start a garden \$ _____
- **Seek out donations.** Local nurseries, farmers and garden stores may donate plants or seeds. Ask families for tools they no longer use, gloves, watering cans or containers.

- **Look for grant opportunities.** Stay up to date on national funding opportunities by subscribing to the National Farm to School Network at farmtoschool.org/join and USDA's Dirt Farm to School Newsletter atfns.usda.gov/cfs/e-letter-archive.
- **Find funding specific to Ohio** through the Ohio School Nutrition Association snaohio.org/Membership.aspx
- **Contact your local extension office.**
Ohio State University Extension: extension.osu.edu/lao
Central State University Extension: centralstate.edu/csuextension



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Step 2: Establish who will use the garden

Example: One classroom, all classrooms, families, staff, community members in the summer, all year round, etc.

Step 3: Decide how to utilize the garden

Example: garden education, discuss where food comes from, nutrition education, taste testing, incorporate into meal plan, agriculture, etc.

Step 4: Choose a garden theme

Examples: herbs, fruits, vegetables, microgreens, etc.

Step 5: Select a type of garden

Examples: seed starting in the classroom, outdoor raised bed, food containers in upcycled materials (i.e., baby pool), hydroponic, etc.

Step 6: Form your team

Establish who will be responsible for watering, weeding, and harvesting each day of the week (i.e., classroom, individual).

Monday: _____

Tuesday: _____

Wednesday: _____

Thursday: _____

Friday: _____

Weekends (optional): _____

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For questions on gardening and nutrition education, contact your local Ohio State University Extension office (extension.osu.edu/lao), Central State University Extension Office (centralstate.edu/csuentension), or your county's Master Gardener Volunteer program (mastergardener.osu.edu/about/ohio-mgv-county-programs).

For more tips on gardening and cooking in the classroom visit farmtoschool.osu.edu/farm-to-early-care.

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Step 7: Check off the materials you have

Indoor Seed Starting:

- ☐ 2x2" pots
- ☐ Humidity dome
- ☐ Tray
- ☐ LED light
- ☐ Soil
- ☐ Seeds and seedlings



Outdoor Gardening:

- ☐ Location with full sun
- ☐ Water access: hose, watering cans, rain catchment
- ☐ Adult and child-sized tools: trowels, shovels, gloves, buckets, and more
- ☐ Seeds or starter plants
- ☐ Plant markers
- ☐ Space to store garden tools
- ☐ Soil will need to be added yearly



Optional season extension materials to extend the growing season: PVC pipe and plastic or permeable row cover.

Teachable Moments

Physical Well-Being and Motor Development – Develop children's small motor skills (hands, fingers and wrists) by allowing them to plant seeds, work the garden hose, and harvest food.

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