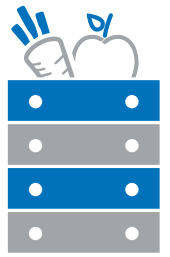


FACT SHEET - HOME GROWN PRODUCE

MULTI-PURPOSE SERVICES SAFE HOME GROWN PRODUCE

There are some risks involved in growing backyard vegetables and herbs, however these can be minimized through good handling practices. This fact sheet summarizes the safety guidelines to help your aged care facility ensure gardening activities are safe and enjoyable for everyone,



STAGE 1 - PRE-PLANT

Site selection

- Avoid growing vegetables/herbs close to areas with a high risk of contamination e.g. animal enclosures, garbage cans, septic system, water runoff
- Consider areas with high exposure to sunlight
- Consider building a raised bed or using a vegepod with a cover for ease of use by residents, particularly for those who are wheelchair bound



Planting Pots (if applicable)

- Ensure the pots have drainage holes
- Avoid using containers that previously held dangerous chemicals



Soil/Fertilizers/manure

- Avoid breathing in any dust when handling soil, fertilizers, manure and compost
- Always wear gloves if possible
- Always wash hands after handling compost, fertiliser, manure and potting mix - even if gloves are worn
- Consider the use of potting mixes for container plants



Water Use

- Ideally use town drinking water and/or tank water



Pesticides

- If pesticide use is necessary, consider the least toxic and non-invasive pest control strategies.
- Only staff and volunteers should handle chemicals
- Follow ALL instructions on the packaging and use responsibly.



FACT SHEET - HOME GROWN PRODUCE

STAGE 2 - HARVESTING

- Protective clothing (e.g. closed toed shoes and gloves) should be worn to prevent injury
- Always wear clean gloves when harvesting produce.
- Bring a clean container (e.g. plastic or a basket) to store the produce
- Harvesting the produce at the right time results in the best flavour and most nutrients
 - Harvest the herbs before flowering to prevent a bitter taste
 - Some vegetables can be harvested half ripe (e.g. tomatoes) and others must be fully ripened
- Discard rotten, damaged or contaminated produce (e.g. has bird droppings or bite marks)
- Avoid damaging or bruising the produce to prevent decay
- Brush or remove the dirt from the plants before putting it in a container



STAGE 3 - FOOD HANDLING

For storage:

- Remove product that shows any signs of rotting or decay
- Produce must be washed prior to entering the kitchen
 - The use of lettuce needs to be approved by your local public health unit
- Store the produce in a closed clean container
- Label the container with name of produce and the date it was harvested
- Store all produce in a refrigerator below 5 °C (potatoes can be stored at room temperature)



For food preparation:

- Wash hands before handling produce with soap and warm water
- Scrub firm produce (e.g. potatoes, parsnips or carrots) with clean scrubbing brush to remove the dirt
- Before using the produce wash thoroughly under cold tap water.
- Trim, peel, or discard outer layer of vegetables (e.g. lettuce)
- Dry the produce with clean disposable cloth
- For cutting, use chopping board specially for fruit and vegetables to avoid cross-contamination
- Keep at chilled temperature 0-5°C if not used immediately

