

Keeping Your Produce Safe for Donation

Safe Garden Soil

- Manure and other materials must be composted to proper temperatures. Purchase soil and compost from a trusted source.
- Keep pet, poultry, and wildlife feces out of the garden.

Good Water

- Vegetable gardens should be irrigated with clean, drinkable water. Contamination from non-potable water can be impossible to remove.
- Many fruits and vegetables do not need to be rinsed before donating but let the receiver know the produce has not been washed yet.
- If your produce does need to be washed, rinse with a *continuous stream* of fresh potable water. Submerging produce in water may result in cross contamination. Let air dry before donation.

Clean Surfaces and Containers

- As you harvest your produce, place directly into a container that has been washed each time before use. Do not use this container for other purposes like holding tools or compost.
- Package produce in clean bins or boxes lined with chemical-free plastic bags (do not reuse grocery bags) but do not seal bags. .

Good Hygiene

- Prior to harvesting, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your face or eating while harvesting.
- Do not harvest if you feel ill or are experiencing symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea.

Fresh Produce

- Do not chop or dice produce, any cutting will shorten the shelf life of produce. You can remove inedible leaves (e.g.: outside leaves of a cabbage or the tops of beets) but keep post-harvest handling to a minimum.
- Time harvest so deliveries can be made immediately, the fresher the better for quality and shelf life.
- If you store produce in the refrigerator, ensure it is wrapped or boxed and stored above any raw meat, poultry, or eggs. Do not store loose produce directly on shelves.
- Only donate produce that you would want to consume.

Resource:

Safe Food Facts for Community Gardens, Colorado State University Extension <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/nutrition-food-safety-health/safe-food-facts-for-community-gardens-9-381/>

Food Pantry Produce Donations, Iowa State University Extension. <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/Food-Pantry-Produce-Donations-Grower-Information>