

Food Safety in Flooded Vegetable Gardens



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Flood waters can create food safety hazards from produce grown in flooded gardens even after flood waters have receded. The following are minimum recommended practices for evaluating and managing risks.

DISCARD PRODUCE TOUCHED BY FLOOD WATER

There is no method to eliminate pathogen or chemical contamination from flood waters to assure that produce is safe. Discard any edible plant parts that have been touched by flood water.



WAITING PERIOD TO HARVEST

In areas of gardens covered with flood water, a minimum waiting period should be observed between flood and harvest. **Crops may be planted during the period, but should not be harvested until the waiting period has passed.**

90 Days Edible portions **do not** come in direct contact with soil
Examples: corn, beans, peppers, tomatoes (staked), cucumbers (trellised)

120 Days Edible portions **do** come in direct contact with soil
Examples: lettuce, leafy greens, potatoes, carrots, pumpkins, watermelon

If flooding occurs early in the season, you may be able to remove any edible portions present during the flood but save the plant for harvests after the waiting period if it is a:

- Perennial crop plants like rhubarb, asparagus, fruits, and berries
- Annual crops like tomatoes and peppers that still have a long period left in the growing season when flooding occurs early in the season

SALVAGING PRODUCE FROM NON-FLOODED AREAS OF THE HOME GARDEN

Removing all produce present during the flood is recommended to minimize risks, but some gardeners may wish to salvage produce from non-flooded areas of the garden. To do so you must be certain that:

- plants were in a non-flooded area of the garden
- the edible parts will mature at least a few weeks after the flood
- were not touched by splashing water

All salvaged produce must be cooked to reduce possible pathogen contamination. All crops generally consumed raw must be discarded. Thoroughly rinse all produce with cold water. Produce may be soaked in a dilute bleach (2T/gallon of water) and rinsed for further reduction of potential pathogens.

According to federal food safety guidelines and due to potential liability this process is not recommended for produce farmers. Farmers should remove and discard all produce.



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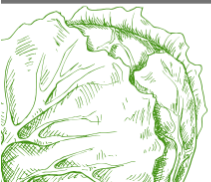
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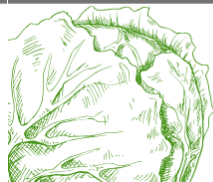
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