

SELF-CERTIFICATION MODEL: Napa County Best Management Practices Agreement for a Garden to Become an “Approved Source”

Most fruits and vegetables consumed in the United States are wholesome and free of pathogens (microbes that cause foodborne illness). Many fruits and vegetables have natural barriers, such as skins and rinds that protect the internal edible parts from contamination. However, contamination of fruits and vegetables can occur any time from planting through food preparation. Most pathogens can be killed by cooking, but they can be difficult to remove by washing when foods are eaten raw. Prevention of microbial contamination is the most effective way to maximize the safety of fruits and vegetables. The best approach to maintaining the wholesome nature of your culinary garden’s harvest is to be aware of potential risks and to establish and implement commonsense practices that will minimize contamination.

Program Criteria

- Operator shall ensure that water used for irrigation is from a clean, potable source. If a question arises regarding the quality of water to be used, it must be tested to ensure it is free of pathogens. Surface water is much more susceptible to contamination. Gray water is not an approved water source for culinary gardens.
- Operator shall identify the effect of rain fall and resultant drainage pathways to minimize runoff through the garden that may contaminate the site.
- Operator shall ensure that all produce is washed with a pathogen-free source before being served, as required by the California Retail Food Code.
- Operator shall ensure that produce and harvest equipment are stored in a sanitary location, protected from vectors, such as rodents and insects, that can spread disease.
- Gardens shall not be planted over or within 10 feet of a septic system or leach field.
- All organic matter will be fully composted, and raw manure will not be used. Composted manure will only be used if purchased from a commercial outlet.
- It is desirable that any plants used in culinary gardens be purchased in Napa County to ensure they are inspected by the Napa County Agricultural Commissioner and free of pests that present a hazard to agriculture in the County.
- Operator shall keep animals away from garden site to avoid contamination to the maximum extent practical.
- Operator shall minimize (but need not eliminate) vegetation at the edges of small fruit and vegetable patches to help avoid nesting or hiding places for rats, mice etc.
- Operator shall minimize the presence of vector attractants such as piles of decaying fruit and vegetables.
- Operator shall contact and gain approval from the Napa County Agricultural Commissioner before utilizing any pesticide on the culinary garden, and Operator shall not use the term “organic” in reference to the produce from the culinary garden unless the products have been registered as organic by the Napa County Agricultural Commissioner.
- Operator shall establish worker awareness of proper hand washing techniques with special attention to cleaning around the fingernails and provide sanitary hand wash and toilet facilities. Workers shall be taught that gloves can contaminate from one place to another such as from the compost pile to harvested produce. Workers with symptoms of illnesses that can be spread by food will not be permitted to handle produce, equipment or food contact surfaces.