

## Gardens are Great!

### ... but Watch out for Lead!

#### Why should I worry about lead?

Lead can make kids and adults sick if it gets in their bodies.

If you or your child eats vegetables or dust with lead, you could get neurological, reproductive, and digestive problems.

#### How can lead get in my garden?

Old paint chips and car gas can have lead.

You might have a lead problem if your garden is near a road or an old house.

Lead is common in Providence

#### How can lead get from the garden into my body?

Lead can be taken up by plants or carried in dust. Besides that, lead doesn't move much.

If you eat plants with lead in them, or if there is dust on the plants, you can get lead in your body.

#### Can I grow food safe from lead?

**Yes!** But you should do a few things first.

This guide will show you 7 ways to spot a lead problem and garden safely. Read On!

## #1 Test Your Soil

- A soil test can tell you if your garden is safe for growing food. It can also give you tips on how to grow the best veggies you can!
- Getting your soil tested is easy! Just follow these steps:
  - Take a clean shovel and dig 8-10 inches down. Put ½ a cup of soil into a bag.
  - Do this in about ten spots around your yard.
  - Mix all the soil together and let it dry in the sun.
  - Take one cup of the dry soil and put it in a zip lock bag.
  - Send the bag of soil to the University of Massachusetts. It costs about \$9 for the test.

For more information on how to take a sample and where to send it:

- Call the EJ League at (401) 383-7441
- Or call the University of Massachusetts at (413) 545-2311 or visit: [www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/](http://www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/)



## #2 Know What to Grow

- Veggies like tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, squash and other fruits are the **safest** to grow; they don't take in much lead. You can also peel them to get rid of lead polluted dust.
- Potatoes, carrots, beets and other roots are the **most dangerous**. They take in the most lead.
- Leafy greens take in **less** lead than roots but can be dirty with lead dust. Be careful

## #3 Wash your Veggies

- Wash veggies with soapy water or 2.5 tablespoons of vinegar to a gallon of water. This takes off lead dust.
- Wash very dirty food outside to keep lead out of your home.

## #4 Add Goodness to your Soil

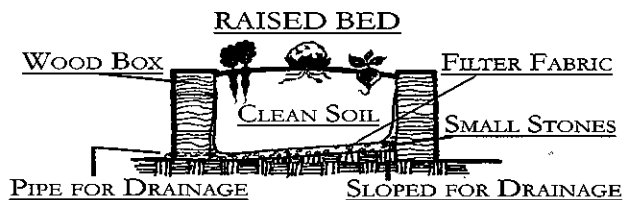
- Add limestone to raise the soil's pH. Your soil test will show the pH, it is best to have a **soil pH of 6.5 or higher**. This means the soil is non-acid.
- Add compost or grass clippings to increase organic matter.

## #5 Watch your Kids

- Let your kids play in clean (no lead) soil.
- Don't let kids eat lead polluted dirt! Wash their hands and toys often.

## #6 Build a Raised Bed

- You can build a **box of clean soil** above the ground if your soil test shows lead.
- **Raised beds are a great improvement** to your yard.
- Be sure to **fill the beds with no-lead soil**.
- **Seal the beds** with filter fabric.
- **Go to the library and hardware store** to learn more about building raised beds.



## #7 Grow in Containers

- **Growing in pots and buckets** is even easier than building a raised bed.
- **For good drainage:**
  - Punch holes near the bottom on the side of the container
  - Raise the pot off the ground if it already has holes, with a brick, for example.
  - Put an inch of coarse gravel or pebbles at the bottom of the pot.
  - Use a light potting mix
- **Herbs, lettuce and radishes** can grow in pots as small as **6 inches wide** and **8 inches deep**, but not smaller.
- **Big veggies, like tomatoes, peppers and eggplant** grow better in **big containers**, like a 5 gallon pickle bucket.

## GARDEN SAFE FROM LEAD

- #1 Test your Soil
- #2 Know What to Grow
- #3 Wash your Veggies
- #4 Add goodness to your Soil
- #5 Watch your Kids
- #6 Build a Raised Bed
- #7 Grow in Containers

Look inside for more information  
or contact:



**Southside  
Community  
LAND TRUST**

Southside Community Land Trust  
(401) 273-9419  
[www.southsideclt.org](http://www.southsideclt.org)



**Environmental  
Justice League of  
Rhode Island**  
[WWW.EJLRI.ORG](http://WWW.EJLRI.ORG)

Environmental Justice League of Rhode  
Island  
(401) 383-7441  
[www.ejlri.org](http://www.ejlri.org)



Childhood Lead Action Project  
(401) 785-1310  
[www.leadsafekids.org](http://www.leadsafekids.org)

# GROW HEALTHY FOOD



with a

# LEAD-FREE GARDEN