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## PROVIDER NEWSLETTER April 2017



It is time to think about gardening, birdfeeders, spring cleaning and more outdoor activities!!

Starting seeds help children see the miracle of life growing.



## Kudos



To all those who have integrated the “new meal pattern” into your menus.



### FYI...

- **Salsa**-In order to count a veggie or a fruit for breakfast or snack the full serving size of 1/4 cup for 1 to 2 yr olds and 1/2 cup for 3 to 5 yr olds, must be served to count as an entire component.
- **Did you know?** If you add additional ingredients to a recipe, the volume of the recipe is changes and the serving size is also changes.
- **Refrigerator temps** need to be **38 degrees or below to ensure that your food is at 41 degrees or below.** Freezer needs to be **0 -10 degrees.**



- Find a Rock
- Paint a Rock
- Hide a Rock

It's all the rage!

You paint a rock, then hide it for someone else to find. This unusual hobby encourages sharing random acts of kindness. You can look up this fun idea on line or go to our Facebook page to get more information.



## Gardens in Preschool and Early Child Care Settings

Early childhood is the ideal time to establish healthy eating habits. Studies have shown school gardens encourage preference and consumption of fruits and vegetables, increase parental support and involvement, and improve children's enthusiasm about preschool/child care, teamwork skills and self-understanding.

### **Gardens as Classrooms** Gardens are living laboratories that create teaching opportunities

1. Garden Planning: Below are basic garden safety considerations for planning a garden.

- Soil: Those planting gardens in urban areas are especially encouraged to have a qualified laboratory check for lead and other industrial contaminants in soil. Land Grant Universities, Cooperative Extension Offices and local health departments are great resources to learn about soil safety; for contaminated soils, schools can bring in soil from an outside source and plant in raised beds.
- Placement: Place the garden uphill from contamination sources or on level ground, and away from streets and areas where wild or domestic animals have easy access to the garden.
- Water: Municipal water is safe; properly used and cared for rain barrels can also be water sources. Test all wells and ponds before use.

2. Harvesting: Follow safe food practices, including hand washing and using clean containers to harvest.

3. Transport/Record keeping: Keep a simple harvest log to record who was harvesting, what types of products were harvested and when they were harvested.

4. Storing: Follow the same guidelines for storing school garden produce as other produce and products. Please refer to Best Practices: Handling Fresh Produce in Schools.

Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Handling Practices (GHPs) are industry best practices that can be used. While USDA does not require GAP or GHP certification for school gardens, state or local departments of health, education or agriculture may have specific standards.<sup>1</sup> Dozens of districts and states have created comprehensive school garden food safety manuals and checklists.

For examples of strong school garden safety guides, please refer to the USDA Farm to School Resources page.

## Food Safety in the Garden

Food Safety is a priority for all food served in child nutrition programs and products that come from school gardens are no exception. Food from school gardens has the shortest physical distance to travel from harvest to plate, so its safety can be managed directly and with more direct oversight than food that travels long distances – a food safety benefit. While safe growing, harvesting and storage practices should be followed when implementing school gardens, there is no research that indicates produce from school gardens carries greater food safety risk than produce from other sources. 4 Steps to Maintaining Food Safety in the Garden