

----- *Garden Project*  
*Middle School, -----, Kansas*  
*Garden Growing Practices*  
*2011-2012 Growing Season*

Our on-site school garden project at ----- is designed to be as safe and healthful as possible. As a living classroom, we strive to create a welcoming, aesthetic, and safe environment for students. We want students to enjoy the outdoors in a setting where we strike a healthy balance with nature, free from potentially hazardous chemicals and pollutants. As a supplier of the cafeteria, we garden sustainably and avoid the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides, and follow safe growing and handling practices. The following document outlines our growing and harvesting practices for the 2011-2012 growing season.

**Water:** All water used in the garden comes from the City of ----- water supply, accessed from a faucet on the east side of -----, adjacent to the Garden.

**Soil Amendments:** Soil testing was done in 2010 to determine overall soil quality and possible soil deficiencies. A copy of the test results is attached. Approximately 15 loads of compost from the City of ----- have been added to the main Garden area and to adjacent areas where berries and fruit trees have been planted. Organic Material Review Institute-certified fish emulsion is applied in appropriate levels. Both unsprayed alfalfa hay and alfalfa meal have been used to correct soil deficiencies. No synthetic fertilizers are used in the Garden. No manure or raw compost has ever or will ever be added to the Garden.

**Composting:** For our on-site composting system at ----- we have chosen completely enclosed composters – two on-ground plastic composters purchased through the City Of -----, and two larger off-ground barrel composters. Compost is turned and maintained effectively to help produce our own compost as quickly as possible; maintain a clean area around the garden; and to avoid odors.

**Pest Control:** No chemical pesticides or fungicides are used in the Garden. We use protective row cover as a physical pest barrier, and hand picking of problem pests such as tomato hornworms and squash bugs. Simple remedies such as diluted organic dish soap are used when appropriate. For larger pests such as rabbits and squirrels, we use fences. Our main pest management practice is prevention with healthy soil and a healthy ecosystem. We understand that bugs are a part of our ecosystem and we do our best to understand their place in our garden.

**Weed Control:** No chemical herbicides are used in the garden. All weed control is manual. Weed suppression with heavy mulching is our most effective weed control.

**Harvest Equipment:** All harvest tools, harvest collection receptacles, work tables, and washing buckets are cleaned and sanitized regularly.

**Harvest Preparation:** Whether we are harvesting to sell produce at the Market or give it to the cafeteria our goal is always to maintain quality, safety, and freshness through care and proper handling. We harvest during the cooler part of the day, either early morning or early evening. We harvest directly from the garden into designated plastic harvest buckets. A shade tent and washing tables are set up to prepare produce, which is washed shortly after harvest. All washing equipment is on-site and elevated from the ground. Wash water, in designated wash buckets, is changed frequently during the washing process. Water is from the approved source. All produce is carefully inspected for quality control and cleanliness, and packed in clean containers for delivery. Produce for the cafeteria is delivered immediately after it is harvested and prepared, taken into the cafeteria kitchen, and placed in the schools walk-in cooler when appropriate.