

# Top 10

## Best practices for healthy gardening

These safe gardening practices can help reduce exposure to lead and other contaminants potentially found in urban soil.

### Wear gloves

Consider wearing gloves when working in the garden.

### Use raised beds

Build beds deep enough for the roots of your crops. Avoid use of railroad ties, telephone poles, pressure-treated wood and previously painted wood to build your beds because they may contain chemicals that can migrate into soil.

### Cover (or mulch) soil

Cover soil in beds and in non-growing areas such as pathways to reduce children's exposure to soil, and to reduce soil splash, dust, and tracking of soil into the home. Different materials can be used such as compost, straw, or bark mulch for beds and stones or wood chips for paths.

### Keep an eye on children

Make sure children do not eat soil or put dirty toys or other objects in their mouths. Young children can be more sensitive to certain chemicals in soil, such as lead.

### Wash your hands

Always wash your hands after gardening, and have children who play or work in the garden wash their hands.



### Use clean soil and compost

Incorporate new compost or other organic material often.

### Maintain soil nutrients and pH

Healthy garden soils have a good nutrient balance and a pH near neutral (6.5–7). You can buy a pH soil testing kit at most home improvement stores.

### Put a barrier under play areas

Create a barrier to separate underlying soil from children's play area surfaces. Consider laying down landscape fabric (or other durable material) and putting clean play materials such as sand or wood chips on top. Check the barrier over time to make sure the underlying soil isn't mixing with play materials.

### Leave soil in the garden

Avoid bringing garden soil into your home. Remove soil from garden tools and harvested vegetables while at the garden, and remove your gloves and change your shoes before you go inside.

### Wash and/or peel produce

Thoroughly wash and/or peel garden produce. This is especially important for leafy and root vegetables, which are more likely to have soil particles on their surfaces.



# Questions?

## Contact us



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## Want to learn more?

### SoilSHOP events



[appletree.utah.gov/environmental-contaminants-and-health/lead-soilshop](https://appletree.utah.gov/environmental-contaminants-and-health/lead-soilshop)

### Childhood lead poisoning prevention



[epi.utah.gov/lead-poisoning-prevention](https://epi.utah.gov/lead-poisoning-prevention)

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