

# 10 Healthy Garden Habits

## for reducing exposure to soil contaminants

Soil contaminants are naturally occurring or human-made chemicals that can have negative impacts on human and plant health.




### — Prepare your garden —

**Duke** UNIVERSITY  
SUPERFUND Research Center  
early life exposures, later life consequences

**NIH** National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences  
Superfund Research Program

- **Keep soil pH above 6.5** Soil pH around 7 is good for plant health and also decreases plant uptake of heavy metals like lead
- **Cover soil and keep it moist** Use mulch or other ground cover to reduce dust in the garden
- **Add compost** Organic matter in compost can help bind some contaminants and make them less harmful. Check the [NC Composting Council](#) website to locate STA or OMRI compost suppliers near you



Eating soil particles is a major route of exposure to soil contaminants

### — Protect yourself and your family —

- **Rinse and peel produce** Carefully rinse leafy produce and peel root crops to remove soil particles
- **Protect your skin** Wear gloves, pants, and boots in the garden
- **Wash your hands** and face with soap and water after you finish gardening
- **Leave dirt at the door** Remove garden boots and clothing at the door to avoid bringing soil into your home or workplace

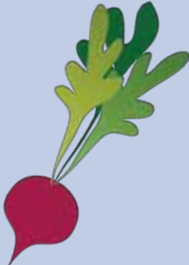


Children are at risk

their exposure may be higher than adults, and they are more vulnerable to the effects of contaminants

### — Prevent introduction of new contaminants —

- **Choose food-safe garden materials** Avoid treated woods or other materials that may leach harmful chemicals into your soil.
- **Avoid pollution from roadways** Hedges or fences can help reduce air pollution and runoff from roadways
- **Limit chemical use** in and around the garden to avoid introducing new contaminants into your soils



For more information about soil contamination in gardens visit:

<https://sites.nicholas.duke.edu/superfundcec/>