



St. Lawrence County Public Health Department

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Press Release

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St. Lawrence County Public Health Tips for Lead-Safe Gardening

Did you know that lead is found naturally in soil? Lead can also build up in the ground where older homes have chipped and peeling paint. This is a large problem in St. Lawrence County where the majority of our homes were built before a federal ban on lead-based paint. Lead is a neurotoxin that is especially harmful to children. It can lower IQ, slow growth and development, and cause long-term behavioral problems. In adults, lead can cause high blood pressure, decreased kidney function, and reproductive problems. Lead from soil can become a health risk when it's ingested, inhaled as dust, and when it is absorbed into the vegetables that you're eating. St. Lawrence County Public Health recommends being mindful of lead hazards when you're plotting and maintaining your garden.

Good Gardening Practices:

- Have your soil tested for lead. The EPA recommends soils used for gardening fall below 100ppm total lead
- Locate gardens away from structures and roadways
- Till soil as deep as possible (at least 4 inches)
- Keep soils well mulched and moist to prevent dust
- Treat soil with lead-free compost
- Keep soil pH above a 6.5 to limit the amount of lead entering plants
- Consider using raised bed gardens but avoid recycled materials that have been painted or treated with preservative
- Avoid using old bathtubs or tires as planters
- Wash hands immediately after gardening and before eating
- Wash all produce, discard the outer layers of leafy greens, and peel root crops

Plants that absorb lead:

Leafy Greens: lettuce, kale, cabbage

Root Vegetables: carrots, beets, onions, radishes

Plants that are less likely to absorb lead:

Strawberries, peppers, tomatoes, apples, squash, cucumbers, beans, corn

Got Chickens?

It's a good idea to be careful of where you allow your chickens to roam as they and the eggs they lay can also be susceptible to lead accumulation.

Where to get a lead soil test in St. Lawrence County:

Life Sciences Laboratories: 315-388-4476

Schneider Laboratories Home Test Kit:

<https://www.slabinc.com/shop/lead/lead-in-paint-dust-or-soil-test-kit/>

Further Information:

[Lead Safe Gardening \(nih.gov\)](#)

[Lead Safe Garden Practices \(sfdph.org\)](#)

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