



WISCONSIN SCHOOL NUTRITION IN A NUTSHELL

The Lifecycle of Farm to School:



Harvesting

Benefits to Harvesting

Food Service Benefits:

Ensure food safety, food quality, and proper storage of garden produce; increase produce yield by harvesting so that plants continue to produce, sustains school gardens through the summer months.

General Benefits:

Physical benefits of fresh air and movement, emotional benefits of mood, self-esteem and attention span, agriculture and nutrition education, community engagement, builds life skills.

Harvesting Practices

Handwashing and Hygiene

- Wash hands for 10-15 seconds before entering the garden.
- Consider using single-use disposable gloves when harvesting and handling produce.
- Wear closed-toed shoes to prevent injury and contamination.
- Harvesters should be healthy when working with produce in the garden.

Harvesting Tools

- Harvesting knives
- Kitchen shears
- Trowels

Clean and sanitize any tools used for harvesting immediately before and after garden work.

Containers

- Place harvest in cleaned and sanitized food grade containers. Do not use garage bags, garbage cans, or any container that was used to hold chemicals.

When and How to Harvest

- Harvest in the morning hours once the dew has lifted.
- Avoid harvesting produce when wet as this increases the risk of spreading plant disease.
- For plants with strong stems, remove produce with a harvesting knife or scissors to prevent damage to the plant.
- Harvest regularly and discard any rotten produce.

When is the Harvest Ready?

- View the Lifecycle of Farm to School Vegetable Handouts to learn about harvesting for a variety of plant types.

Post-Harvest Handling

- After harvesting, transport to the kitchen immediately.
- Wash all produce in cool water in a food sink (do not wash produce in a handwashing sink). Produce should be washed before stored in the cooler.
- Remove any soil, dust, or other contaminants during the wash process.
- Receive and inspect garden produce using the same policies as you use for produce received from distributors.
- School nutrition staff should be available to receive garden harvest. Produce should not be left when school nutrition staff are not present.
- Do not use any produce that has signs of animal or insect damage.

Storage

- Refrigerate produce immediately after it has been washed and cleaned.
- Store the garden produce separately from other purchased produce to maintain traceability.
- Storage humidity level varies by produce type. Leafy greens require high humidity, about 95%, while onions can be stored at 65-75% humidity.
- To minimize wilting and degradation, make sure that air can circulate in all storage areas.

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