



Recovering from a Flood: Garden Flooding

Floodwater can bring raw sewage, heavy metals, harmful bacteria, oil and chemicals into your garden and contaminate your produce making it unsafe to eat. There is an increased risk of *E. coli*, *Listeria*, *Vibrio*, *Salmonella*, Hepatitis A and Norovirus when eating produce from a flooded garden. Consider these guidelines when deciding what to do with produce from a flooded garden.

Understanding When to Keep or Discard Crops after a Flood

- Produce that remained above flood water and is intact can be eaten. Rinse with clean water, then soak in a chlorine solution of 2 tablespoons bleach to a gallon of water. Finally rinse with cool, clean water. Peel or cook before eating.
- Produce with flowers produced on growth that developed after flood waters receded is safe to eat, but it should be washed well, peeled and cooked.
- Discard any fruits with bruises, cracks or blemishes. Wash, soak in a chlorine solution and rinse before eating.

Preserving Flood Contaminated Garden Products

Produce that can be washed, sanitized and cooked may be safely canned. If produce is unfit for consumption because of flood waters, do not can.

Produce should not be dehydrated as the temperature of home dehydrators is not high enough to destroy bacteria.

Cross-Contamination

If flood waters did not touch garden crops, products are safe, but it is important to prevent cross-contamination from flood affected areas. Hands, clothing and footwear that have been worn in flood water contaminated areas can carry harmful bacteria that can be introduced into the garden. Garden equipment should not be used in a non-flooded field if it has been in a flooded field, unless it has been cleaned and sanitized. Similarly gardening clothes worn in flooded fields should not be worn in non-flooded fields unless cleaned after use.

Produce to Discard

Garden Product	Recommendation
Leafy greens	Discard, it is not possible to clean these because bacteria could collect in their ridges and crevices
Soft fruits such as berries	Discard unless they can be cooked because it is too difficult to clean them
Root vegetables; beets, carrots, potatoes, peanuts	Discard unless they are 4 - 8 weeks from harvest
Melons that will be eaten raw	Discard, unsafe even if surface is sanitized
Plants where fruits have set or where flowers are evident; tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower	Discard any plant with bruises, cracks or other blemishes as bacteria could collect here

Cooking Flood Contaminated Produce

Cooking will kill pathogens, but it will not improve the quality of the produce or remove chemical contaminants. Even if cooked there is a risk of chemical contamination from produce that contacted flood waters.