

What can you do

Factsheet #3

Test your soil!

The first step toward safe garden soils is to take a soil test! Whether you are just beginning to start a garden or you have been gardening for years, it is important to know if there is harmful lead in your soil.

University of Maine's Soil Testing Service

If you are interested in a soil test, you can request a free soil test kit (with instructions) online via the University of Maine's Soil Testing Service. The Standard Soil Test costs \$18 and will tell you if your soil has high levels of lead, in addition to basic information about nutrients and the general qualities of your soil.

Safe Soil Recommendations

Low Risk Soils ◆

Low Risk soils contain **less than 100 ppm** of lead. This amount of lead is safe and natural!¹ No action is needed.

Moderate Risk Soils ◆◆

Moderate Risk garden soils contain **between 100 and 400 ppm** of lead. It is OK to garden in moderate risk soils, but you need to be careful! When you garden, you unintentionally consume small amounts of soil that stick to the vegetables, your hands, and everything you touch. Plants with fuzzy textures are hard to get all of the soil off.

High Risk Soils ◆◆◆

High Risk garden soils contain **more than 400 ppm** of lead and are unsafe to garden in. Protect yourself from the lead in your garden soil with the following steps as well as the recommendations listed above.¹

Steps to stay safe from garden lead ¹:

(Additional information in Factsheet #4)

1. **Wash your hands** and gardening clothes very well.
2. **Wash everything grown in your garden** thoroughly to remove all dirt.
3. **Choose the right plants** and avoid planting leafy or fuzzy vegetables and root vegetables.
4. **Consider building a raised bed** to garden in.
5. **Limit your contact with the dirty soil.**
6. **Build a raised bed and fill it with clean soil** to grow your plants in.



For more information

¹ EPA, "Technical Review Workgroup Recommendations Regarding Gardening and Reducing Exposure to Lead-Contaminated Soil," (<https://semspub.epa.gov/work/HQ/174577.pdf>).

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