



College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Sciences

Disaster Education Response Team



Can I Salvage My Flooded Garden?

Sandria Godwin and Richard Stone

Flooding can cause extensive damage to houses, roads, and businesses, but what about your backyard garden? Flood waters may be contaminated with sewage, river or creek water, farm run off, or industrial pollutants. If your garden was exposed to flood waters then there is a chance that pathogens or toxins have been introduced to your produce. If flooding occurred early in the growing season then you may be able to salvage some of your crops. Below you will find some tips for considering which crops you can salvage and which ones need to be thrown in the garbage.

Do not serve any produce, cooked or raw, that has been in contact with flood waters to:

- Young children
- Older adults (60 or older)
- Pregnant women
- Those with weakened immune systems

- All produce that came from a flooded garden and would normally be eaten raw should be thrown away.
- Early season produce that will be harvested within a few weeks after the flood, and that remained above flood waters should still be safe to eat as long as it is cooked and peeled.
 - Examine the early season produce carefully during harvest, and discard any that are soft, cracked, bruised, or have openings allowing contaminants inside.
- Underground produce that is still early in its growing season (more than 4 weeks until harvest) should be able to grow to maturity safely. They should still be washed, rinsed, sanitized and cooked before consumption.

Sanitize your produce by soaking it for 2 minutes in a weak chlorine solution (2 tablespoons of bleach for every one gallon of water). Rinse well.

- Late season vegetables that come from flowers that developed after the flood should be safe. They should still be washed, rinsed, sanitized and cooked before consumption.
- Canning produce that has been in contact with flood water is not recommended.



TSU-12-0043(A)-15c-13515 - Tennessee State University is an AA/EEO employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Ms. Tiffany Baker-Cox, Director of Equity and Compliance, 3500 John A. Merritt Blvd. Nashville, TN 37209, (615) 963-7435.

