



Gardening in Lead Contaminated Soil

Elevated lead (Pb) levels in soil can pose a risk for gardening. However, gardening and growing food offers many benefits. Here are steps to reduce risks.

<600 ppm	Do not garden, cover with mulch or rocks until soil is excavated and replaced. Or add raised beds.
400 - 600 ppm	Avoid growing leafy vegetables like spinach.
150 - 400 ppm	Avoid growing root crops like carrots or potatoes.
80 - 150 ppm	Less than 150 ppm is still considered safe for gardening.
<80 ppm	Garden as normal. Regularly replace top 2 inches of soil with mulch or compost.

Best Gardening Practices



Wear gloves and wash hands after gardening, especially before eating



Wash produce especially before eating



Leave shoes outside or avoid tracking dirt into your home



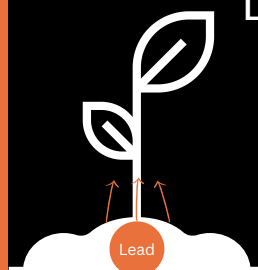
Peel root vegetables and remove outer leaves of leafy greens

Phytoremediation

Plant based technique used to reduce pollutants in soil.¹ Certain plants such as sunflower can absorb lead and other heavy metals.

Limitations

- Multiple harvesting cycles needed (can take years)
- May not reduce soil contaminants to safer levels
- Risk of transfer to animals consuming plants



Resources

LA City Sanitation

Free mulch pick up for LA City residents at 10 locations

Please visit lacitysan.org

Get the Lead Out Website

More gardening resources can be found on <https://ejresearchlab.usc.edu/en/get-the-lead-out/>

1) Pandey, V. C., & Bajpai, O. (2019). Chapter 1 - Phytoremediation: From Theory Toward Practice. In Phytomanagement of Polluted Sites Market Opportunities in Sustainable Phytoremediation (pp. 1-49). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-813912-7.00001-6>