

**Westport Weston Health District thoughts on school gardening:**

Natural soils must be thoroughly tested for pesticides, and other pest control chemicals (for termites) – especially those that are currently banned but may have been applied to the property many years ago.

Soils must also be tested for lead if the grounds have/had any pre-1978 buildings and also for hydrocarbons.

There should be a layout with locations of wells, septic systems, and in-ground oil tanks on the property.

Raised beds with pre-tested and approved soils would be best. They should be protected from animals and animal feces.

Many parts of fruits and vegetables may be poisonous, such as the leaves of rhubarb and the tomato plant itself.

Many insects will be attracted and consideration must be given to students that have allergies to stings.

Levels of added nitrogen should be monitored so that elevated levels do not accumulate in leafy greens such as spinach.

Good drainage in the garden areas will be important to prevent ponding and mosquito breeding.

Only potable water should be used when watering.

If food material for composting will be piled onsite, then only plant materials should be included to prevent the intrusion of rats and other problematic wildlife, creating a nuisance or safety concern.

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