MINIMIZING CONTACT

- Wear gloves & wash your hands after working in soil & before eating.
- Don’t track dirt from the garden into the house.
- Thoroughly wash produce with filtered water before storing or eating.
- If you grow root crops or leafy greens: scrub/peel root crops, & remove outer leaves of leafy vegetables.
- Moisten soil when gardening to reduce airborne dust.
- Avoid touching your mouth while gardening.
- Wear a dust mask to reduce contaminated soil ingestion & absorption while digging.
- Shower after gardening to remove soil.
- Wash garden tools outside.
- Store designated gardening clothes outside.
- Wash clothes after working with soil. Wash garden clothes outside by hand or in a separate load.
- Don’t compost plants grown in contaminated soil.
- Don’t allow children to play in uncovered soil where lead exceeds 300 ppm.

MAINTAINING SOIL

- If contamination is between 300 ppm & 400 ppm, grow fruiting crops rather then leafy greens & avoid root crops.
- Cover bare soil with mulch or other materials to reduce soil dust deposits.
- Use soil amendments to maintain neutral to higher pH (above 6.5). Phosphorus fertilization, organic matter additions, & biochar also reduce lead availability.
- Add topsoil or clean fill from certified soil sources. Use barriers such as landscape fabric or plastic sheeting between the original site soil & added uncontaminated soil/compost.
- Use raised beds or containers filled with uncontaminated materials.
- Remove the top 3-5 cm of soil in raised beds & replace it with compost each year. Compost significantly dilutes lead concentration in contaminated soil.
- Replace contaminated soil with uncontaminated soil.
- If you’re concerned about irrigating with lead-contaminated water, you can attach a lead filter to your garden hose and/or use a rain barrel (but be aware of contaminants from the roof/catchment surface).

GARDEN PLACEMENT

- Build plots away from roads, railways, & old buildings.
- Build a hedge or fence to reduce windblown contamination from streets or other contaminated areas.
- Locate gardens away from old buildings.
- Survey the property for potential lead hazards.

SOIL TESTING

- Wind-transported soils can recontaminate sites. Retest every 1-3 years until you understand the pattern, then every 3 years.
- Soil test for lead & other factors that may affect the availability of lead in the soil, including pH.
- Screen children for a blood lead level test.

IN THE CITY

GOOD SOIL PRACTICES & STRATEGIES FOR GARDENING

Compiled by Chicago Asian Americans for Environmental Justice

SOURCES CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE. VISIT WWW.CAAEJ.ORG