

Food Damage Guidelines for Community Garden Members October 2, 2024

The Water's Edge garden suffered a blow from flooding caused by Hurricane Helene. The water level was above the fence around the garden. Anything that wasn't tied down likely floated away. We have found garden gates in the trees behind the garden. All the mulch has washed away. The flood also damaged the pump that brings water to the faucets so there is no water in the garden. **Everything in the garden has been contaminated by the flood waters.**

The North Carolina Extension Service has published guidelines for how community gardens should deal with contaminated flood waters. **Do not eat produce from the garden and do not plant anything until we have had the soil tested for heavy metals and other contaminants.** They Extension Service also recommends waiting 100 days to plant root crops and 120 days for other produce.

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO IF YOU HAVE A GARDEN AT WATER'S EDGE:

1. Clean up your garden of remaining plant material.
 - Wear personal protective equipment (for example, gloves, masks and closed toe shoes) while working.
 - Remove debris and throw it in the trash. Do not compost residue from a flood.
 - Wash your hands frequently during and after garden cleanup.
 - Clean your tools frequently.
 - Remove clothes and shoes before entering your home to prevent tracking in any contaminants.
2. Loosen the soil in the bed, if necessary, and spread the red clover seed that will be provided at the October 8 community garden meeting. This cover crop will replenish nutrients and dilute the effect of contaminants in the soil. Every garden must plant this cover crop.
3. Wait 100 days to turn over the cover crop and plant root crops; 120 days for other produce.

Your Board is presenting a list of damages to to the HOA to seek reimbursement for soil testing to determine what heavy metals and other contaminants are in the soil, the destroyed tiller in the shed, replacement of mulch and gravel for the aisles, replacement of water pump, and other miscellaneous damages.

Please come to the October 8 meeting to pick up your seed and ask any questions.