WHAT IS LEAD?
Lead is a naturally occurring metal that can be hazardous to human health, especially for children under 6 years of age.

WHY IS LEAD A CONCERN?
- 1 in 20 children in Detroit is lead poisoned
- Children with blood lead levels higher than 10 µg/dL* have lead poisoning
- Lead poisoning can cause learning and speech problems, hyperactivity and nerve damage that cannot easily be reversed and are likely to last a lifetime
- The effects of lead poisoning cannot always be seen
- A healthy diet high in vitamin C & D, calcium, zinc and iron can help reduce lead poisoning
- Children become lead poisoned by eating dust, dirt, and paint that contain lead
- All children under 6 should be tested yearly

WHY IS THERE LEAD IN THE SOIL?
- Lead is found naturally in the soil in low amounts
- Most houses built before 1978 have leaded paint inside and outside
- Soil (mainly in large cities) may have high lead levels because of heavy industry and exhaust from leaded gas (banned in 1986)

* µg/dL = microgram lead per deciliter of blood

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WHERE CAN LEAD BE FOUND IN YOUR YARD?

- Lead may be found in the top 4 inches of soil around your yard
- Soil lead is found in highest amounts near the walls of buildings, especially if they were painted prior to 1978
- Soil lead levels can be higher close to roads

WHERE IS LEAD IN THE GARDEN?

- Lead is not usually found in the fruit of the plant like cucumbers, tomatoes, or strawberries
- Lead is most often found in the root of plants like carrots, beets, turnips, potatoes
- Soil with lead can collect on leafy vegetables (collards, kale, turnip greens) especially those close to the ground

WHEN SHOULD YOU BE WORRIED?

When your yard has a soil testing level of
- Below 100 ppm*: safe range, no action needed
- 100-400 ppm*: level of concern, use Best Gardening Practices
- 400-2,000 ppm*: NO gardening before contacting a professional gardening group like The Greening of Detroit
- Above 2000 ppm*: gardening of any kind is NOT recommended

* ppm = Parts-Per-Million = 1 milligram Pb per kilogram soil (mg/kg) (Concentration of Lead from soil test)

GET YOUR SOIL TESTED!

The suggested local source is the professional gardening group The Greening of Detroit (see back)
www.detroitagriculture.org
Other Resources
Michigan Dept. of Community Health
www.michigan.gov/mdch
University of Massachusetts
Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Laboratory
www.umass.edu/soiltest
Accurate Analytical testing LLC
www.accurate-test.com

BEST GARDENING PRACTICES

Yearly Upkeep

- Treat soil with lead free compost
- Till soil as deeply as possible (at least 4 in.)
- Plant your garden away from buildings, garages and the street
- Keeping your soil pH above 6.5 will help limit the amount of lead entering plants

Before/During Gardening

- Wear gloves and wash up after gardening
- Keep a layer of mulch around plants to stop soil from splashing onto leaves during rain
- Do not eat or smoke while gardening
- Wet the soil before working in the garden to keep soil dust down
- Keep children under 6 years old out of gardens with soil lead levels above 100 ppm* because they may eat dirt

After Harvesting/Before Eating

- Wash all vegetables with soap and water or a vinegar water mixture (1 part vinegar to 9 parts water)
- Throw away outer leaves of leafy vegetables, and wash inner leaves well
- Peel and wash root vegetables well (if your soil lead levels are higher than 400 ppm* you should not plant root crops before consulting a professional gardening group)

CLEANING UP AFTER GARDENING

- Wash hands after working in the garden
- Remove shoes/boots before coming into your home
- Keep a separate set of clothes for gardening
- Wash gardening clothes separately