

Rules and Regulations

Many early childhood instructors and directors are hesitant to participate in farm to school activities like cooking and gardening with their students due to uncertainty about the rules and regulations around these activities.

The following guidelines for gardening have been drawn directly from the NC Rated License Assessment Project, NC Division of Child Development, and NC Children's Environmental Health Branch:

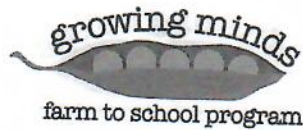


Gardening:

- **NCRLAP** - Gardening is viewed as an intentional planned activity when there are enough tools and supplies for children (such as gardening spades, gloves, watering cans, wheelbarrows). Handwashing is required when children return indoors after gardening. Gardens/Gardening is not recommended for infant and toddler play areas.
- **DCD** - Growing a garden inside your licensed child care outdoor learning environment is fine for children 3 years of age or older. Gardens would need to be maintained. Growing a garden in infant and toddler play areas (children 2 years of age or younger) is not allowed.
- **CEHB** - Handwashing is required after outdoor activity including gardening. It is important to harvest the ripened fruit to prevent it from falling to the ground and attracting vermin. The use of pesticides is not recommended for gardens in licensed child care programs.

Composting:

- **NCRLAP** – There would be no safety concerns unless the area was not maintained well. Involving the children in the composting process would count as an example of a nature/science activity considered for the ECERS-R, FCCERS-R, and SACERS.
- **DCD** - Again, maintenance is a key issue. Failure to maintain properly could result in odor, bugs and other rodent problems.
- **CEHB** - Sanitation rules require composting areas be covered and maintained to prevent attracting rodents or vermin. In addition, worm bins must be kept covered. Handwashing after such activity is a requirement. The local Cooperative Extension Office may be helpful. Some compost may contain rotting food material.



The following guidelines for cooking have been drawn directly from the NC Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Rules:

Cooking:

RULES:

15A NCAC 18A .2804 FOOD SUPPLIES

(g) Nothing in the Rules of this Section shall prohibit the use of fresh garden fruits and vegetables, including those grown at the child care center, so long as they are washed before being served.

15A NCAC 18A .2807 FOOD PREPARATION

(d) Raw fruits and raw vegetables shall be washed with potable water before being cooked or served.

INTERPRETATION:

Child care centers may grow their own gardens and serve these foods to children so long as they are washed with potable water before being cooked or served. Child care centers may also receive fruits and vegetables from local farms and gardens.

RULES:

15A NCAC 18A .2808 FOOD SERVICE

(f) Children attending child care centers shall not be in the kitchen except when participating in a supervised activity.

INTERPRETATION:

Children may be in center kitchens during supervised activities such as cooking activities.

Additional Resources:

<https://naturalearning.org/node/404> – Information on composting.

https://naturalearning.org/childcare_production_gardens - Information on production gardens.

https://naturalearning.org/sites/default/files/1_Growing%20and%20Cooking%20Veggies_Final_10192015.pdf – Information on cooking.