

Greater Buffalo Urban Growers Pledge 2019

Grower / Farm Name: _____



The mission of the Food Policy Council of Buffalo and Erie County (FPC) is to build and strengthen a sustainable and just regional food system through policy recommendations, awareness, education and advocacy. A regional food system aspires to have a collaborative network that integrates sustainable food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management to enhance the environmental, economic, and social health of a particular area. As a body that advocates for all members of our regional food system, we encourage transparency and the sharing of information between producers and consumers to create a food system that is fair and honest.

Urban agriculture is an expanding part of the Buffalo and Erie County regional food system. The potential health, social, environmental, and economic benefits of urban farms and gardens are far-reaching. There are also potential risks associated with growing food in urban settings. Knowing your grower and their practices is the best assurance that the food you buy is responsibly grown with methods that honor the safety of producers, consumers, and the living environment. While risk exists no matter where our food comes from, these practices adopted by responsible growers can keep potential risks to a minimum.

To enable consumers to identify the urban farms they want to support with their food dollars, the FPC established The Greater Buffalo Urban Growers Pledge. This Pledge is based on the integrity of the urban grower and seeks to describe best management practices with regard to soil safety and other safe farming practices. This document was developed with local farmers, experts at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County and members of the FPC. The Pledge serves to meet the FPC mission of encouraging transparency and the sharing of information between producers and consumers that is fair and honest.

Growers who commit to the Greater Buffalo Urban Growers Pledge sign the Pledge annually, which they may display for customers. Those who sign this Pledge agree that customers may inspect the urban farm by appointment to ensure that the farmer is adhering to the recommendation outlined below. The Pledge is a voluntary commitment to follow the recommended guidelines set forth below and is not considered a legal document.

The FPC does not investigate or make any guarantee that the individual grower is complying with The Greater Buffalo Urban Growers Pledge. If a customer visits a farm and believes the urban farmer is not honoring the Pledge, the customer may write the Chair of FPC to register a complaint.

IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF OUR SOIL FOR FOOD PRODUCTION, WE PLEDGE THAT IN OUR FARMING WE WILL:

- Research the history, prior land use, and potential contamination of our farming site(s) through information obtained from the appropriate municipal Department of Permits and Inspections, the NYSDEC Environmental Remediation Databases, Sanborn Maps, or by having an environmental professional prepare a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment.
- Perform soil test(s) with a certified lab or University for lead and other heavy metals and consult with testing service provider or environmental professional to interpret the results. Consider testing for other contaminants if deemed necessary from the site review. Conduct soil tests initially and on-going every 5-years.
 - o Gardens on residential land that use only raised beds (with appropriate commercial grade landscape fabric/geotextile) and/or containers for all food production on-site, shall be exempt from the initial soil testing recommendation. Heavy metal testing will be recommended on the 5th year and thereafter every 5-years, as described above.
 - o Test compost or other amendments for lead and other heavy metals before adding to soil, unless the materials have been previously tested by grower or distributor and found to be below guidance values.
- Compare soil test results with NYS DEC soil cleanup objectives for residential land use (which includes agricultural use) and, when contamination is higher than specified guidance values, identify and implement mitigation strategies to limit potential contamination and exposures.
- Keep original soil tests and interpretations along with last 2 tests on file for review or submission to appropriate agencies, if required.
- Train all employees, volunteers and visitors on soil safety for growing food and ensure their safety on the farm.
- Incorporate or top dress the garden area with materials such as clean soil, compost or other organic matter.
- Adjust soil pH to near neutral to minimize plant uptake of metals, and test pH at least annually and after an amendment event such as compost addition or heavy liming.
- Mulch non-growing areas to reduce dust and soil backsplash onto crops or maintain healthy grass or other ground cover.
- Reduce tillage.
- Not use: synthetic insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, or fertilizers, GMOs, chemically treated seeds, toxic materials, and sewage sludge.

X _____

Greater Buffalo Urban Grower

X _____

Food Policy Council of Buffalo and Erie County President

This Pledge would not have been possible without _____



Michigan Riley Farm

Wilson Street Urban Farm



Joseph Gardella PhD

