



# Lead in the soil

## What is lead and where does it come from?

Lead contaminates the soil from many sources including:

- ✓ Lead paint
- ✓ Lead plumbing
- ✓ Leaded gasoline before it was outlawed
- ✓ Automobile emissions

Lead is of concern because in high concentrations it is toxic to both humans and animals. Lead is more common in urban areas but it can still be safe to garden if certain precautions are taken. Lead in soil is more dangerous to children who play in that soil, than to children who eat vegetables grown in it. If you are not gardening, consider growing and maintaining a lawn over the contaminated soil, or cover it with a thick layer of woodchips.

If you are gardening, here are some solutions to dealing with lead in the soil:

- ✓ Soil with a PH above 7 binds with lead, making it less likely to be absorbed by humans or plants. If your soil test indicates acidic soil with a low PH level, adding lime and other organic materials like compost will bring it up to a safer more alkaline level.
- ✓ Consider building a raised bed garden, and adding clean soil. The plants will be growing above the contaminated soil.
- ✓ Do not grow root crops such as potatoes, radishes or carrots that will absorb the lead more readily than Fruiting vegetables such as tomatoes, squash, eggplant, beans, corn
- ✓ Wash all vegetables with a water and vinegar solution before eating
- ✓ Always wash your hands or your children's hands after working in the garden – this is a simple and effective measure to guarding against exposure to lead.