Using Garden Produce in Child Nutrition Programs

Gardening offers participants an opportunity to learn about nutritious foods through hands-on experience. Teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking are inherently a part of the gardening process, and participants can take ownership of foods from seed to plate. Academic opportunities also are available from science to math to reading to language arts.

Can the school food service funds be used to purchase seeds and materials for an on-site garden?

Yes. Supplies (including watering cans, rakes, fertilizer, etc.) for the garden can be purchased using funds from the nonprofit foodservice account. If nonprofit foodservice funds are used, foods produced must be used in the nutrition program or sold with monetary benefits accruing back to the nonprofit foodservice account. More information on garden expenses can be found in the USDA Farm to School and School Gardens Expenses memo.

Are there food safety concerns with an on-site garden produce?

It is important to know food safety practices at any level of the food chain. Participants, staff, and volunteers should receive basic food and gardening training. Training available at: https://cnw.ksde.gov, SFSP, Administrative Handbook, Chapter 5. See best practices at: best-practice-handling-fresh-produce-schools.pdf (azureedge.us)

What documentation should be kept on file?

Harvest date, harvested product, location of harvest, and date produce was served should be kept on file for traceability. Food Safety (HACCP) Plan Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) should be accessible for receiving, preparing, serving, and storing produce.

Resources: School Garden Q&As, USDA FNS https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cn/SP32-2009os.pdf#page=2
Using Gardens to Grow Healthy Habits in Cafeterias, Classrooms and Communities, USDA FNS USDA School Gardens Fact Sheet (azureedge.us)