



Maine Farm Safety Program

by Dawna L. Cyr, farm safety project assistant, and Steven B. Johnson, Ph.D., Extension crops specialist

Harvesting Crops by Hand Safely

Harvesting crops by hand is hard work. It doesn't have to be dangerous. There are tools, machines, the elements, and other workers to consider. Safe working practices are important.

General Safety Tips

There are some common safety tips that apply to all forms of hand harvesting. Taking care of one's body is the most important of these. Wear the proper clothing. It is best to dress in layers. They can be removed as the temperature rises and put back on as the temperature drops. Wear a hat to protect the head and gloves to protect the hands. Wear shoes or boots that provide adequate foot protection. Wear sunscreen to lessen the chance of skin cancer and insect repellent when needed. Be careful when applying it on the face, because sweat can wash it into the eyes.

Get plenty of rest. Harvesting any crop by hand is hard work and the body gets tired. Also, drink plenty of fluids, especially water, and eat well-balanced meals. Snacks in-between meals are a good idea to keep energy levels up. Take breaks every few hours to regenerate and stay alert.

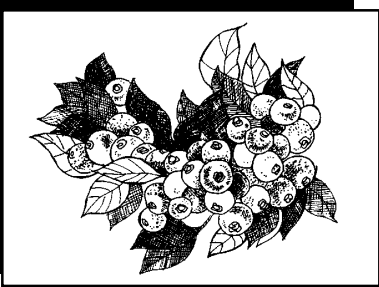
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- **Wear proper clothing for the job.**
- **Drink plenty of fluids, especially in the heat of the day.**
- **Eat well-balanced and nutritious meals.**

Take care of personal hygiene at the end of each day. Remove clothing as soon as you get home. Wash your hands and face with soap before eating. Take a shower and wash your hair every day. Wash work clothing separately from others and wear clean clothes every day.

Harvesting Blueberries

Harvesting blueberries is hard work. The hours are long and raking is very strenuous. Know the signs of heat exhaustion. (See fact sheet #2312 Battling the Elements Safely.) Use caution when setting the rake down. Make sure it cannot be stepped on or fallen upon.



Harvesting Broccoli

Broccoli pickers work for long hours in all weather conditions. They need to dress accordingly and use the right tools. Knives should be kept sheathed when not in use. Use caution when handling them. When walking with a knife, keep the blade behind the body and away from others. Treat any cuts immediately and seek medical attention if needed.

Harvesting Potatoes

Harvesting potatoes takes a few short weeks in the fall, but much is done during that time. Pickers need to be ready to work when the time comes. Wearing gloves will protect the hands from the rough dirt and cold weather. Pickers need to be aware of what is happening around them in the field. They can be overlooked and possibly run over by vehicles in the field.

This Maine Farm Safety fact sheet is part of an educational fact sheet series produced by University of Maine Cooperative Extension. For more information on farm safety, contact your county Extension office.

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