

RHS Campaign for School Gardening



Supported by **Waitrose**

Health and Safety in the School Garden

Advice & Risk Assessment Guidance
for Schools

RHS Registered Charity No: 222879/SCO38262

Royal Horticultural Society: School Gardening Risk Assessment Guidance

Garden Sessions

Designated garden areas and classrooms for horticultural activities will vary from school to school. The purpose of this risk assessment guidance is to draw attention to hazards commonly encountered in the delivery of horticultural activities both in the garden and the classroom. It is vital that any other hazards (not covered by this proforma) are identified and precautions and control measures are documented before work begins. Schools should therefore use this guidance to produce their bespoke risk assessment.

This is a general risk assessment guidance document covering gardening activities for the school year. This includes activities working alongside pupils as well as any planned teacher and/or parent training sessions. A site assessment can also be carried for specific sessions (a copy of site assessment form is at the end of this document for information).

The guidance may apply to all participating individuals, whether RHS Regional Advisor, staff member, parent, helper, visitor/observer or pupil.

Please note that it is the school's responsibility to carry out a risk assessment in regard of individual children and their suitability to take part in gardening activities, on each and every occasion.

The School can reserve the right to decline participation of individuals who may be at risk or who, in their opinion, are likely to cause harm to themselves or to others.

I agree to abide by this Risk Assessment Guidance and agree to ensure that copies of this Guidance and/or the bespoke School Gardening risk assessment and accompanying information are passed to all adult participants.

Signed & Dated.....

By (insert full name).....

At.....school

Please retain the signed originals of all completed forms at the school.

RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE FOR GARDENING IN SCHOOLS

Hazard	Risk	Who is at Risk	Controls in Place/Action Required	Check by Ticking
Animal manures	Microbial contamination (potentially pathogenic)	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Wherever possible schools should avoid the use of fresh organic manures to incorporate into the school garden in favour of alternative soil improvers, it is appreciated that this is not always possible. It is essential that if children do work with manures they wear gloves when undertaking this task. Staff to ensure the children wash their hands in antiseptic gel at the completion of the task.	
Bees, wasps and Insects	Stings	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	These are natural inhabitants of the garden and pose no risk unless provoked. Teaching staff must be aware of any children allergic to specific insects. If stung, children should seek first aid from teacher/school.	
Chemicals used in the garden	Inhalation, skin or eye contact.	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils, school visitors	Adopt environmentally sensitive approach to garden i.e. garden without the use of chemicals. If used, chemicals to be used by qualified adult and in the proper manner and to be used and stored in accordance with health and safety legislation. Where is it is deemed absolutely necessary to use chemical(s) , a separate risk assessment and COSHH assessment should be carried out	
Climbing	Falling	Pupils	Adequate supervision and instructed not to climb objects in the garden.	

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Composting	Airborne particles Flies Vermin Lifting/ Turning	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Avoid turning compost heaps but keep as cold heaps. Adults only to turn heaps when pupils are not present, adults must wear face mask and gloves to do this. Schools must avoid making compost heaps too wet by adding too much fruit waste as this attracts flies and does not make effective compost. If too much fruit waste then this will need to be disposed of elsewhere and compost heaps just kept for garden waste.	
Fallen leaves	Slips, Trips Litter within leaves	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Do not collect fallen leaves for making leaf compost in schools, or areas of the school grounds, where there is potential for hazardous objects such as syringes/ broken glass/ sharp items to be buried amongst leaves. No running in garden/ leaf collecting area. Pupils to wear gloves and use tools appropriate for the job e.g. lightweight plastic leaf rakes and leaf hands.	
Fire	Dangers from heat, smoke and fire	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Emergency evacuation procedures to be in place and understood by all participants. Emergency exits to be kept clear at all times (some sessions will be classroom based). Assembly point identified and all participants aware of it.	
Infection	Various	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Children to wash their hands after touching plants or soil/compost and before handling food and drink. Either cover any cuts or abrasions before garden sessions or ensure gloves are worn.	

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Lifting	Injury, strain.	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Children and adults are not to lift heavy objects or to overfill wheelbarrows where in use.	
Mulching	Airborne particles Fungi Turning	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Buy organic mulch materials in bags from a reputable source or use a weed suppressant such as mypex. Alternatively, use shredded paper, layers of cardboard or homemade compost. Reduce risk of air borne particles by wetting loose mulch materials before applying.	
Plant supports	Damage to the eye	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Plant supports to be avoided where possible. When being used care should be taken. Children and adult helpers to be made aware of hazard and to take care when leaning over beds. Cane toppers to be used where cane height less than 1.8m high.	
Plants	Ingestion, allergic reactions	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Adults to be made aware of any children/volunteers/staff known to have specific plant and food allergies or hay fever, and to know the school representative responsible for administering that medication. Some of the plants may be irritating to skin (gloves to be worn), or contain parts which are harmful or toxic if eaten, or have been sprayed with chemicals. Children, School staff and volunteers must not eat	

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			<p>any plants from the school garden unless they are competent to identify the potentially harmful plants in their garden. Staff must not allow the children to pick the plants or put their fingers in their mouths.</p> <p>Children must not eat parts of plants unless instructed to do so, and must wash hands after garden sessions.</p> <p>When undertaking taste tests in the garden, all produce and pupils hands should be washed in tap water (not water butts) before eating.</p> <p>Do not plant potentially poisonous plants (eg daffodils) in edible beds.</p> <p><i>NB Detailed information on harmful or potentially poisonous plants can be found on the resources/starting school gardening section of the Campaign for School Gardening Website.</i></p>	
Running children	Slips, trips and falls	Pupils	Children adequately supervised and instructed to walk in the garden.	
School traffic	Injury from vehicles	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Groups to keep to designated paths and to be road safe when moving between class and garden.	
Soil	Tetanus	School staff,	Schools to check with parents/carers and advise	

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	<p>Toxoplasmosis Skin Irritation Soil blowing into eyes</p>	<p>volunteer helpers, pupils</p>	<p>coordinators as to whether or not pupils have had tetanus inoculation before sessions start.</p> <p>Hands must be thoroughly washed (by pupils and adults) at the end of each session and especially before eating food/ drinking.</p> <p>Adult helpers or staff to check garden before pupils attend session and remove any animal mess whilst wearing gloves. Bury/dispose of mess away from the garden and wash trowel and hands afterwards.</p> <p>If pupils come across buried animal mess, adult to remove as above and pupils to wash hands immediately if they have had direct contact. Gloves to be worn when working with the soil.</p> <p>Proprietary compost e.g. for seed sowing, can be handled without gloves but hands must be washed after the session. If pupils or school staff have skin irritations e.g. eczema, or cuts/abrasions, or are likely to have a suppressed immune system, then disposable gloves should be worn.</p> <p>Bags of compost or potting media should be opened with the head away from the opening as far as practically possible.</p> <p>Moisten dry compost/potting media before using.</p> <p>Avoid storing compost/potting media in</p>	

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			<p>greenhouses or other warm places.</p> <p>Avoid using loose compost and digging/ raking soil in dry and windy conditions.</p> <p>Compost heaps – see composting below</p>	
Syringes/needles /other contaminated waste	Puncture injuries, pathogenic microbial contamination, chemical contamination	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	To be disposed of according to school policy	
Tools	Injury, trips and falls	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	<p>Tools correctly maintained to be safe to use. Children to only use tools when instructed to do so. At start of each teaching session tool safety to be embedded</p> <p>When working with Reception/ Year 1 pupils, forks are only to be used by pupils if there is a ratio of 1 adult helper to 1 child.</p> <p>All tools counted 'out' and 'in'. Appropriate type and size of tools to be selected for age of children.</p> <p>'Tool stop' point to be clearly identified and all tools to be returned here when not in use during a teaching session.</p> <p>Pupils with certain behavioural difficulties may be precluded from using certain tools. Advice to be</p>	

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			<p>sought from class teacher. Pupils to be supervised during all gardening activities. Tools to be stored safely when not in use.</p> <p>Ensure adequate working space for pupils when they are working around garden beds.</p>	
Water	Slips, trips, falls	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	<p>Children shown how to correctly water plants to avoid soaking pathways. If schools have hose pipes they should be coiled/ rolled up after use and not left lying out where they could become a trip hazard.</p> <p>No running.</p>	
Water Butts & Hoses	Drinking Washing Hands Water borne bugs/ infections Drowning	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	<p>Water butts only to be installed by the school if this is in line with the school's own Health & Safety Policy. Such butts must have child proof, locked lids and should be firmly secured on a stable surface.</p> <p>Pupils must not wash their hands or wash garden produce to eat with water from the butts.</p> <p>When using water from the butts for watering then pupils and adults must wash their hands afterwards.</p> <p>Water butts should be emptied and scrubbed out once a year. This job should be carried out by an adult with gloves and face mask.</p> <p>Water butts to be kept in cool position as far as</p>	

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			<p>practically possible. If not, consideration to be given to insulation or light reflecting paint.</p> <p>Empty water out of full hoses after use. (NB Full hoses left in sun or warm conditions may breed micro-organisms such as Legionella)</p>	
Weather	<p>Sunburn, dehydration, hypothermia, Slipping in wet weather Soil blown into eyes.</p>	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	<p>Appropriate clothing to be worn for the weather conditions (hot, cold, wet, windy). Adequate fluids to be drunk when it is hot and work activities to be planned in shady areas where possible.</p> <p>Schools to advise pupils and parent helpers to apply own suncream and wear hats.</p> <p>In wet weather, garden surfaces can become slippery e.g. clay soils. Close paths if too slippery and revise activities to minimise risk of slipping. No running to, from and in garden.</p> <p>Avoid using loose compost and digging/ raking soil in windy conditions.</p>	
Weather (flooding)	Potential (pathogenic) microbial contamination		<p>If gardens become flooded and waterlogged do not harvest crops from these areas for consumption, and relocate garden in unflooded area.</p> <p>Do not grow crops in flooded area for at least 2 years after the flood.</p>	

Site Assessment Form

Date		School		PO (sign & initial)	
Site conditions?			Weather conditions?		
Trip hazards?			Animal Mess?		
Tool count			Condition of tools?		
Other potential risks:					
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Site conditions?			Weather conditions?		
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