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Health and Safety in the School Garden

Advice and Risk Assessment Guidance for Schools



Hazard	Risk	Who is at Risk?	Controls in Place/Action Required	Check by ticking
Animal manures	Microbial contamination (potentially pathogenic)	growit officer, school gardening 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bees, wasps and Insects	Stings	growit officer, school gardening staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	These are natural inhabitants of the garden and pose no risk unless provoked. Staff should be made aware of any children allergic to specific insects. If stung, children should seek first aid from teacher/school.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chemicals used in the garden	Inhalation, skin or eye contact.	growit officer, school staff, volunteer helpers, pupils, school visitors	Adopt environmentally sensitive approach to garden <i>ie</i> 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climbing	Falling	Pupils	Adequate supervision and instructed not to climb objects in the garden.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compost	Pathogenic microbial contamination	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Compost should be stored in cool place <i>ie</i> not in a greenhouse.	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Composting	Airborne particles Flies Vermin Lifting/ Turning	<i>growit officer, school gardening staff, volunteer helpers, pupils</i>	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.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fallen leaves	Slips, Trips Litter within leaves	<i>growit officer, school staff, volunteer helpers, pupils</i>	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 eg lightweight plastic leaf rakes and leaf hands.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire	Dangers from heat, smoke and fire	<i>growit officer, school gardening staff, volunteer helpers, pupils</i>	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.	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Infection	Various	growit officer, school gardening 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lifting	Injury, strain.	growit officer, school gardening staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Children and adults are not to lift heavy objects or to overfill wheelbarrows where in use.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mulching	Airborne particles Fungi Turning	growit officer, school gardening 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plant supports	Damage to the eye	growit officer, school gardening 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plants	Ingestion, allergic reactions	growit officer, school gardening staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Officers and staff to be made aware of any children 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 and School staff must not eat 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. (continued on next page)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Hazard	Risk	Who is at Risk?	Controls in Place/Action Required	Check by ticking
			<p><i>(continued from previous page)</i></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>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.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Running children	Slips, trips and falls	Pupils	Children adequately supervised and instructed to walk in the garden.	<input type="checkbox"/>
School traffic	Injury from vehicles	growit officer, school gardening staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	Groups to keep to designated paths and to be road safe when moving between class and garden.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soil	Tetanus Toxoplasmosis Skin Irritation Soil blowing into eyes	growit officer, school gardening staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	<p>Schools to check with parents/ carers and advise growit officers 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>Officers/ adult helpers 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.</p> <p>Gloves to be worn when working with the soil.</p> <p><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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			<p><i>(continued from previous page)</i></p> <p>Proprietary compost eg for seed sowing, can be handled without gloves but hands must be washed after the session. If pupils or school staff have skin irritations eg 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 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>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Syringes/needles/other contaminated waste	Puncture injuries, pathogenic microbial contamination, chemical contamination	growit officer, school gardening staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	To be disposed of according to school policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tools	Injury, trips and falls	growit officer, school gardening 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><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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			<p><i>(continued from previous page)</i></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 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>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water	Slips, trips, falls	growit officer, school gardening 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>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water Butts & Hoses	Drinking Washing Hands Water borne bugs/ infections Drowning	growit officer, 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 and 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 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> <p>Hoses should not be stored in a warm place eg greenhouse.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Weather	Sunburn, dehydration, hypothermia, Slipping in wet weather Soil blown into eyes.	growit officer, school gardening 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 eg clay soils. Close paths if too slippery and revise activities to minimise risk of slipping.</p> <p>No running to, from and in garden.</p> <p>Avoid using loose compost and digging/raking soil in windy conditions.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Date	School	PO (sign & initial)
Site conditions?	Weather conditions?	
Trip hazards?	Animal mess?	
Tool count	Condition of tools?	
Other potential risks:		
Other risk assessments which will apply (use relevant numbers from above)		

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