Health and Safety in the School Garden

Risk Assessment Guidance for Schools

SAMPLE

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Hazard	Risk	Who is at Risk	Controls in Place/Action Required	Check by Ticking
1. Tools	Injury, trips and falls Minor cuts and bruises	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• Tools correctly maintained to be safe to use. Children to only use tools when instructed to do so and closely supervised at all times. • Close adult supervision when working with spades and forks – keep children working with large tools in a different area to children kneeling working with hand tools. • Use the right tool for the job which is appropriate for the age of the child. • Tools to be stored safely when not in use. 'Tool stop' point to be clearly identified and all tools to be returned here when not in use. • Ensure adequate working space for pupils when they are working around garden beds.	
2. Lifting	Injury, strains and sprains	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• Project officer demonstrates correct lifting techniques (back straight, knees bent) and asks if anyone has any back or muscle problems. • Children and adults are not to overfill wheelbarrows where in use. • Do not lift heavy objects without help. • Use a trolley to transport materials. • All equipment appropriately maintained and checked prior to use.	

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3. Soil and unintended animal manures from cats, dogs and foxes	Tetanus E-Coli Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease) Toxoplasmosis Toxocariasis Bioaerosols Skin Irritation Soil blowing into eyes	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• Adult helpers or staff to check garden before pupils attend a session and remove any animal mess whilst wearing gloves. Bury/dispose of mess away from the garden and wash trowel and hands afterwards. • Gloves to be worn when working with the soil. • Instruct children how to use tools correctly to avoid soil being flicked into each other's eyes. • Avoid using loose compost and digging/raking soil in dry and windy conditions.	
4. Homemade (school – made) garden compost	Infection from airborne particles Flies Vermin (When lifting and transporting the compost or when turning the compost heap)	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• Compost, brown and green waste should be placed in a suitable compost heap or compost bin. • Do not allow material in the process of composting to become dry and thus mouldy. **Fungal spores are potentially hazardous if inhaled.** • Avoid adding too much fruit waste as this attracts flies and does not make effective compost. **Refrain from adding food waste.** • If vermin is a problem consider buying a tumbler type compost bin which is sealed. • When handling homemade (school-made) compost wear gloves and cover all cuts or abrasions. • Reduce risk of air borne particles (bioaerosols) by damping dry compost or mulch, but not so much that it becomes wet and prone to splashing.	
5. Potting compost	Infection from airborne particles	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• Compost should be stored in a cool place i.e. not in a greenhouse and the container (bag or dustbin) should be sealed when not in use. • Children should wear gloves when handling potting compost and ensure any cuts or abrasions are covered.	

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5. Potting compost **Continued**	Infection from airborne particles	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• Handle potting composts gently to avoid splashes and bioaerosols. Damping dry material to avoid dust and ensuring wet compost that might cause splash is not used. • Use potting composts in a well-ventilated place.	
6. Plants	Ingestion, allergic reactions	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• Audit the school grounds to identify toxic plants and inform anyone who is using the garden. 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. • Adults to be made aware of any children/volunteers/staff known to have specific plant and food allergies or hay fever. Wear gloves if plants are a skin irritant. • Supervise vulnerable children at all times, especially if they are inclined to eat plants. • Children, school staff and volunteers must not eat any plants from the school garden unless they are competent to identify the potentially harmful plants in their garden. • Do not plant potentially poisonous plants (e.g. daffodils) in edible beds.	
7. Animal manures e.g. farmyard manure from stables and farms.	Infection from various micro-organisms such as : Tetanus E-Coli Salmonella Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease)	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• **Do not use fresh animal manure in schools.** • Manure from plant eating animals such as school guinea pigs and rabbits can be added to homemade (school-made) garden compost then used in the garden. • If animal manures are to be used to improve the soil, they should be commercially composted manures only, which are made safe by manufacture and can be purchased from garden centres or DIY shops.	

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7. Animal manures e.g. farmyard manure from stables and farms. **Continued**	Infection from various micro-organisms such as : Tetanus E-Coli Salmonella Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease)	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• If children are spreading commercially composted manure over the soil they should be closely supervised and always wear gloves, cover any cuts or abrasions. • **Manures should be spread gently**. Do not use or spread manures when very wet as this can cause splash of bacteria within them e.g. bioaerosols. • Where feasible check that all children have had their pre-school vaccinations. Check that children aged 14 and up have had their top-up vaccine before working with soils. • Children avoid eating and drinking until hands are washed. Antiseptic gel is ok only if soap and warm running water are not available.	
8. Bees, wasps and Insects	Stings	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• Be aware of any wasp or bee nests and avoid these areas. • Be aware of any children who are highly allergic to stings.	
9. Chemicals used in the garden	Inhalation, skin or eye contact	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils, school visitors	• Adopt an environmentally sensitive approach to the garden i.e. garden without the use of chemicals. • If used, chemicals such as weed killers to be used by an adult in accordance with an appropriate COSHH assessment/directions on the packaging. • **Never use chemical when there are children present.**	
10. Trees	Falling branches	Pupils	• Gardening directly under trees to be avoided and/or trees assessed for safety by a competent person.	
11. Fallen leaves	Risk of piercing wounds due to litter within leaves	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• If leaves are to be collected for making leaf mould check the area in advance to make sure there are no hazardous objects such as syringes/ broken glass/ sharp items buried amongst leaves. • Wear gloves when collecting leaves or use leaf grabbers. • Use leaf rakes to collect leaves in a pile and then pick them up.	

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12. Plant supports	Damage to the eye	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• Plant supports to be avoided where possible. • When canes or twigs are used, place cane toppers on the top and try to make them as tall as possible so they are above eye height. • Point out the potential risk when people are leaning over beds.	
13. Water butts & hoses	Slips, trips, falls Water borne bacteria Legionella and other infections	School staff, volunteer helpers, pupils	• Water butts to be child proof, secured on a stable surface and to have locked lids. • When using water from the butts for watering, pupils and adults must wash their hands afterwards. Children must be shown how to correctly water plants to avoid soaking pathways. No running water. • **Don't use water that has been stored in stagnant storage tanks that are full of debris/rust/algae or at temperatures between 20-45°C.** • 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. • Empty water out of full hoses after use. (Full hoses left in sun or warm conditions may breed micro-organisms such as legionella). • Hoses should not be stored in warm place e.g. greenhouse. • Hose pipes should be coiled/rolled up after use and not left lying out.	

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Emergency Contact Details

Nearest Hospital and phone number	Names of appointed first aiders	Directions to phone which is nearest to the garden area and how to get external line	School Office Contact Number (If phoning from a mobile)

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Site and Activity Risk Assessment Form

School Name:

Date	Area to be worked in	Project Leader Name and Signature
Activity	Weather Conditions	Site Conditions
Animal Mess	Dangerous Litter	Any vulnerable Learners?

Potential Risks (Use Numbers in General Risk Assessment Document)	Action Required to Reduce Risks

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