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**Completing a gardening risk assessment**

Carrying out a risk assessment is vital to ensure any events or activities you run take place safely and that all risks and hazards are minimised.

This document will take you through the suggested stages of carrying out a risk assessment.

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|  | **What to do** | **How to do it** |
|  | Identify hazards | Look at things that can cause injury or damage, thinking about activity, location and surroundings. You will need to visit the venue/site to carry out a risk assessment |
|  | Identify all those who may be affected by the hazards | Think about the people around, not just your volunteers, who could be  injured or affected by the activity |
|  | Estimate the current level of risk and the precautions that are already in place | Using the matrix below. Think about how serious the risk is to people and property. What is already in place to prevent the injury or damage and does this reduce the risk? |
|  | Decide if any new precautions are needed | List actions required to reduce risk and decide if you want to go ahead with the activity or event. This will also help you identify what appropriate clothing or footwear volunteers should bring/wear |
|  | Record your finding, agree actions and a timetable for actions | Make sure everyone knows what they are going to do and by when.  Make sure it is done and record it |

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|  | **Level of Risk** | **Severity** | | |
|  |  | **Slight harm**  Superficial injuries, minor cuts and bruises. | **Harmful**  Minor fractures, ill health leading to minor disability. Medical treatment likely to be required. | **Extremely harmful**  Multiple injuries, major fractures, fatalities. |
| **Likelihood** | **Very Unlikely**  (Only in exceptional circumstances) | Low | Low | Low |
| **Unlikely**  (Rarely happens) | Low | Low | Medium |
| **Likely**  (Often happens) | Low | Medium | High |
| **Very likely** (Nearly always happens) | Medium | High | High |

**Completing your assessment**

Run through this list to help you think about what you may need to consider when completing your risk assessment:

* + **Venue** – capacity, welfare facilities, access, toilets
  + **Emergencies** – fire, first aid, someone going missing
  + **Manual Handling** – setting up, breakdown and delivery of the event/activity
  + **Slips and trips** – around the venue and associated area
  + **Food and drink** – provision of refreshments
  + **Allergies and poisoning** – handling of plant materials, soils or other substances e.g. plant food
  + **Working near water** – will this be a hazard?
  + **Electrical equipment** – use of laptops/tablets or electrical gardening equipment and power tools

Other things to consider, particularly if gardening off-site such as in a community garden or space

* Do you have a first aider available on site? Do you have a first aid kit nearby?
* Do you have permission for your activity? Do you have a list of key contacts for the event/activity? E.g. a key point of contact for the venue or the others who will be running the event/activity
* Do you have a process in place if someone goes missing from the event/activity?
* If relevant, do you have appropriate insurance cover for the event/activity to go ahead?
* If using a venue, are you aware of the evacuation procedures and the process for raising an alarm in an emergency? Do you know the process for locking up/cleaning the venue after use?

**Document your assessment**

Use the template on the next few pages to document your risk assessment. Delete anything that isn’t relevant to your setting or activity and add in any other risks or hazards you’ve identified.

It is recommended risk assessments are completed regularly and an updated version of the document is on file should it be needed.

**Gardening Risk Assessment**

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| **Brief description of planned event/activity** |  |
| **Location** |  |
| **Group / class and number of people involved** |  |
| **Date of event / workshop or occurrence if regular** |  |
| **Person in charge** |  |

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| **Risks / hazards**  What could cause harm or damage? | **Precautions**  What are you already doing to reduce the risk and are there any further controls necessary to reduce the risk to a reasonable level? | **Risk level (low, medium, high)** | **Precaution in place? (Y / N)** |
| Transmission of the COVID-19 virus within the group/class/club | * Divide the class or group into smaller groups where possible * Keep to social distancing measures – 2m where possible or 1m with a face covering * Operate a one-way system if appropriate * Carry out activity outdoors where possible or indoors with lots of space and ventilation * Wear face coverings indoors if appropriate * Wash hands regularly and have sanitizer available * Have equipment such as tools and gloves for each member of the group, which are not shared. Alternatively, ensure tools and equipment are cleaned or wiped down with anti-bacterial wipes/spray between and after use * Wipe down tables before and after use * Anyone who is feeling unwell should stay home and follow the government guidelines * Signage to remind participants of the safety measures | M |  |
| Working in the garden or other outside space  Potential hazards: ingestion of plants, stings, falling branches, drowning in water, traffic | * Check the site regularly, looking out for possible trip hazards, falling branches, open water etc. * Ensure participants are aware of what is required of them and the standards of behaviour expected * Ensure participants are advised of what to do in the event of an emergency or injury * Ensure participants are advised of any potential risks e.g. sloping surfaces, slips, trips, hazardous plants and insects, open water, dangers of equipment in the vicinity * Ensure participants are advised not to pick plants or eat plants on the site * Mark off / tape off with hazard tape the area if near traffic or roads * Ensure participants are supervised at all times and no one is left unattended, particularly if working outside of the school/usual group site * Ensure teachers/leaders/adults are aware of any allergies / health conditions/ learning disabilities etc. if they may affect safety. e.g. a child not being able to understand safety instructions or with an allergy to bees * Ensure participants have adequate foot protection, i.e. no open toed shoes |  |  |
| Slips, trips and falls  Potential hazards: scrapes, serious bruises, cuts, lacerations, broken bones. | * Ensure shoes and clothes are appropriate for the weather and for working outdoors * Check the garden / work site for trip/slip hazards, dangerous debris etc. before and after sessions * Highlight to the groups of any possible trip hazards such as hosepipes or steps. Consider signage or bright tape to mark out hazards clearly * Gardening tasks are always carried out in a tidy manner so that the creation of trip hazards is avoided * Tools are stored tidily and away from walkways when not in use. Create a ‘tool stop’ or make participants aware of the boundary to ensure tools aren’t taken out of bounds or away from the garden * Tasks are adapted or abandoned if weather conditions result in very slippery conditions |  |  |
| Lifting, pushing and pulling  Potential hazards: back injury, muscular or skeletal injury, strains and sprains. | * Demonstrate correct lifting techniques to participants (back straight, knees bent) and ask if anyone has any back or muscular problems * Do not overfill wheelbarrows * Do not lift heavy objects, such as bags of compost, without help * Use a wheelbarrow or trolley to transport materials |  |  |
| Use of tools  Potential hazards: cuts, lacerations, injured fingers/limbs, electrocution. | All tools:   * Ensure participants have correct equipment on before using tools – participants should wear gloves when using hand tools and suitable footwear (boots) when using digging tools * Participants taught to use tools safely and correctly * Ensure adult supervision when working with tools * Participants should work a safe distance away from each other to prevent damage to themselves and others around them * Participants will only be given tools appropriate for their ability and the task * A safety visor or glasses to be worn when there is a risk of tools or debris contacting with the eyes e.g. using power tools * Tools are regularly maintained and damaged tools taken out of service * Keep a first aid kit nearby   Power tools:   * Only use the tools in dry weather and only by those who know how to use them * Safety check for power toolse.g. checking cables are intact (no frayed areas) or batteries are charged up * Tools are regularly maintained and damaged tools taken out of service * No power supplies to be placed or power tools to be used near water, in poor or wet weather * Trailing leads to be kept out of walkways, to be clearly identified with hazard tape if crossing paths |  |  |
| Soil and manures  Potential hazards: tetanus, diseases, sickness, skin irritation, soil in eyes, flies, vermin | * Check site before work and remove any animal mess while wearing gloves * Gloves to be worn when working with soil * Cover any cuts or abrasions with plasters, sleeves etc. * Instruct young people on using tools correctly to avoid soil being flicked up * Avoid digging or using loose soil in windy conditions * Do not use fresh animal manure in school. Only use well-rotted manure purchased from a garden centre or DIY store   Homemade compost:   * Ensure brown and green waste are placed in the correct compost heap or bin * Do not allow material that is in the process of composting to become dry and mouldy – fungal spores can be hazardous if inhaled. Keep compost damp but ensure it isn’t so wet it splashes when used * Avoid adding too much fruit and vegetable waste which can attract flies. Avoid adding any other food waste * If vermin is a problem, consider buying a sealed compost bin * Manure from small plant-eating animals, such as guinea pigs or rabbits, can be added to homemade compost and used in the garden |  |  |
| Seeds, bulbs and plants  Potential hazards: digestion, inhalation, skin irritation, sickness | * Check packaging or information of new plants or bulbs * Audit the grounds or site to identify any toxic plants and inform anyone working in the garden * Wear gloves when handling seeds and bulbs * Explain dangers of eating or consuming seeds and bulbs * Wash hands before and after handling * Use hand tools where appropriate * Be aware of any allergies or hayfever * Supervise vulnerable children at all times or anyone who may be more inclined to try eating the seeds, bulbs or plants * Do not plant anything that could be toxic or poisonous (e.g. daffodils) alongside edible plants |  |  |
| Insect bites and stings  Potential hazards: bees stings causing anaphylactic shock, bad reactions / infections caused by Horse fly bites | * Identify anyone with allergies and plan work accordingly * Inspect site for any sign of wasp or bee nests * Identify areas/vegetation which might harbour biting insects and work with caution * In very warm dry summers, participants need to be especially made aware of horse flies and their potential dangers; bites can become infected and can even cause sepsis * Check body for ticks after working in high risk areas, bracken/long grass * First aiders and first aid kit present onsite |  |  |
| Chemicals  Potential hazards: inhalation, skin or eye contact | * Never use chemicals when children are present * Adopt an environmentally sensitive approach to the garden and consider avoiding all chemicals * If chemicals such as weed killers need to be used, ensure they are only used by an adults, following the instructions carefully * Keep any other chemicals such as plant feed out of reach of small children and only allow older children to use if they have been taught to use them properly and safely |  |  |
| Trees  Potential hazards: falling branches | * Gardening directly under trees should be avoided * If unavoidable, trees should be assessed for safety by a competent or suitable person |  |  |
| Fallen leaves  Potential hazards: risk of piercing wounds | * If leaves are to be collected for making leaf mould or for clearing away, check the area in advance to make sure there are no hazardous objects such as syringes, broken glass or other sharp items buried in the leaves * Wear gloves when collecting leaves or use leaf grabbers * Use a rake to collect leaves into smaller piles before picking up |  |  |
| Plant supports  Potential hazards: damage to the eye | * If needed, keep plant supports, such as garden canes, as tall as possible so they are above eye height * All plant supports should have a cane topper covering the pointy top. You can buy plastic bottle tops or make your own from plastic bottles or clay * Point out the potential risk to participants |  |  |
| Water butts and hoses  Potential hazards: slips, trips, water-borne bacteria, Legionella | * Water butts should be child-proof and secured on a stable surface with locked lids * When using water from the water butt, all participants should wash their hands afterwards * Show children how to water carefully and correctly to avoid spilling water onto pathways, clothing etc. * Do not use water that has been stored in stagnant storage tanks that could be full of debris, rust or algae, or at temperatures of between 20-45°C |  |  |
| Weather  Potential hazards: sun stroke, sun burn, slips, illness from cold | * Ensure clothing is appropriate for the weather * In strong sun, ensure everyone is protected from the full glare of the sun. Use hats, suncream etc. but also ensure there is shade and water available * In cold weather, ensure participants are wearing appropriate layers, warm socks, gloves etc. Ensure they do not stand around, keep them busy and moving around to stay warm * In wet weather, ensure showerproof coats and wellies are worn to help stay dry. In the event of heavy rain or storms, plan for an indoor activity |  |  |
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| Date of Assessment: | Completed By: |
| Review Date:  *It is a good idea to ensure you keep your risk assessment up to date and review it periodically for all your event and activities before they take place again.* | Reviewed By: |