

Nightingale Gardeners volunteers (also referred to as 'The Group' or 'we') aim to provide a healthy and safe environment for volunteers and also for garden users. This project is volunteer-led but works closely with Cambridge City Council Streets and Open Spaces (SOS). Their staff can advise on good practice¹.

H&S policy - general

Garden Co-ordinators

In December 2022, there are two Garden Co-ordinators ('co-ordinators') Rebecca Jones and Julian Hickling. **The Garden co-ordinators are volunteers.**

1. The co-ordinators can run group volunteering sessions when they, and the Group, feel they are reasonably confident and reliable to do so, including with help from SOS staff.
2. They can be contact points for SOS staff and can receive relevant training via them.
3. They can be officers of the Group but don't need to be.
4. Co-ordinators will have some first-aid training and know where the first-aid equipment is kept. They will ensure that there is at least one mobile phone capable of calling for emergency services. They will do their best to provide first aid to volunteers. They can choose to help, as good citizens, other garden users and make the Group's first-aid kit available.
5. The co-ordinators can decide how to run their sessions, for their own convenience and safety, for example with prior booking and a limit on numbers.

Volunteering sessions – how and when they can take place

6. At least one co-ordinator is required to lead and supervise sessions. If a garden co-ordinator isn't available, the session will be cancelled.
7. If the co-ordinators consider the weather to be unsafe (or unpleasant) for some or any tasks, they can cancel the session.
8. Between sessions, the co-ordinators might carry out tasks in the garden; it is their choice if they invite others to join in.
9. Between sessions, volunteers might carry out some low-risk unsupervised tasks, such as harvesting, watering, pruning, planting or weeding. It is their responsibility to carry these out safely, including for other garden users. Advice and help from co-ordinators can be sought.

Equipment

10. Volunteers shouldn't attempt tasks if there aren't suitable tools available. The garden has only a few of each type of tool, which might mean not everyone can get involved in every task.
11. The first aid kit will be suitable for use in a garden environment and for sessions with just a few volunteers.
12. Volunteers must wear protective gardening gloves and suitable footwear. We will provide disposable gloves for tasks such as painting.

¹ This advice is compatible with the Cambridge City Council: Volunteering Hazard and Control Template 4/1/2015.

13. Some tools, such as the lawn-mower, scythe and electric power tools, should only be used after instruction from, or agreement with, a garden co-ordinator.

Volunteers – suitability and matching to tasks

14. New volunteers will need to arrive at the start of their first session so there is time to induct them, including about safety. We do not want the induction to be onerous, but people need to work safely for themselves and also others.
15. At a minimum, volunteers need to be wearing suitable clothing, especially shoes. They need to be sober, for their safety and that of others.
16. We need to make a record, for use during the session, of their name and a contact phone number in case of emergency.
17. The co-ordinators will be responsible for starting off volunteers at each session. This can mean garden volunteers needing to be patient until a co-ordinator is available. The co-ordinator will aim to find out what the potential volunteer can do and their preference that day. They will aim to match them to a suitable task that will be safe. Co-ordinators will use their common sense and experience to match volunteers with tasks.
18. We are insured for only adult volunteers, over the age of 18 years. Some very simple tasks can be suitable for children, but they must be supervised at all times by their responsible adult. Also, garden volunteers (including co-ordinators) must be available to show them how to do the task and in some cases keep an eye on them. If the garden is very busy, this might not be possible. Children need to have their own gloves.
19. If the co-ordinators are not confident that the volunteer is safe to carry out a task that day, for example due to intoxication, sleepiness, mood/behaviour or clothing, they will be asked to come to another session instead.
20. Volunteers should not carry out tasks within the pond enclosure unless agreed with the co-ordinators.

Risk assessment

21. Co-ordinators can assess obvious risks before a task but other risks might arise during the task. Co-ordinators will not be able to supervise all volunteers at all times during tasks.
22. We will advise regular volunteers of the benefits of tetanus vaccination during gardening tasks and encourage them to check if they need a booster dose.

General working

23. We will aim to work in a way that is calm, tidy and clean.
24. The indoor areas have waste bins, which are emptied often.
25. We expect volunteers to return any tools to an area close to the tool shed where they can be supervised before being cleaned and put away. This is necessary when volunteers are taking a break from their task and at the end of their tasks.
26. They must not leave tools unattended in the larger garden area or park where they might cause injury, especially to children, or get lost.
27. A small rota of volunteers unlocks and locks the garden gates twice daily. They check briefly the garden at each time for obvious hazards and contact the co-ordinators or SOS staff if they are worried. For their safety, volunteers should not confront

uncooperative park users, for example people who refuse to leave the garden at locking-up, or who are in the garden after it is locked.

Events

28. The garden is used for groups and events distinct from the advertised garden volunteering sessions. These will have their own risk assessments.

Key risks in the garden and mitigation

These are assessed by co-ordinators, alongside SOS staff, and measures taken to reduce the risks (see Table 1).

Table 1. Identified risks and mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
<p>A. Human-to-human transmission of SARS-CoV-2. This can be via breathing in virus, especially in crowded indoor spaces or from contaminated surfaces.</p>	<p>People shouldn't volunteer or come to the garden if they (or close family/household contacts) are known to be infectious with any disease and/or have symptoms. This includes having a positive COVID-19 lateral flow test.</p> <p>Volunteers should retain reasonable physical distancing between themselves and people not in their household groups, including garden users.</p> <p>Volunteers should bring their own gardening gloves. There are very limited numbers of spare gloves, which can be marked and reserved for their use only.</p> <p>They can choose to wear face coverings when working outdoors and when they are inside areas.</p> <p>The compost toilet will not be used until further notice.</p> <p>Because of the risk of airborne spread of viruses in poorly-ventilated spaces, we will continue to discourage people from spending time inside the tool-shed or club hut and we will not organise activities inside the club hut unless it is very well ventilated.</p> <p>The polytunnel doors will be kept open for ventilation.</p>
<p>B. Garden soil and compost can be a source of infection and/or lung irritation. Cats and other animals use the garden as a toilet, which increases</p>	<p>It might not be suitable for volunteers who are immunosuppressed to carry out some higher risk tasks in the garden. They should ask their health professionals for advice.</p> <p>Any cuts or abrasions should be clean and covered with a waterproof plaster before attempting tasks.</p> <p>Volunteers should protect their skin (especially hands) and lungs from contact with soil and compost by wearing gloves.</p> <p>Volunteers are advised to bring their own dust masks and safety glasses before handling dusty compost.</p>

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Risk	Mitigation
the risk of infection.	
<p>C. Toxicity. Garden plants can be toxic on ingestion or skin contact. Chemicals used in the garden can be toxic.</p>	<p>We won't sow or grow plants with a very high risk, such as those with irritant sap. We can grow a small number of tall Euphorbia in places that are not close to garden users.</p> <p>We will aim to remove high-risk plants from the garden.</p> <p>We won't use or keep poisons in the garden.</p> <p>We will store safely chemicals, such as paints, and follow their instructions for use.</p>
<p>D. Garden plants can have thorns. Thorns in the skin can cause serious infections.</p>	<p>Where possible, we will select less-thorny species.</p> <p>Some tasks might not be suitable for volunteers with bare arms or legs.</p> <p>Garden co-ordinators have access to thicker gloves.</p> <p>Gardeners can use loppers to pick up thorny material, which can be disposed of outside the main compost heap.</p>
<p>E. Garden tools can cause injury during use but also when left unattended, including after sessions.</p>	<p>We will keep tools in a reasonable state and repair and dispose of ones that could be dangerous.</p> <p>We will store tools safely, in a locked tool shed or take them home.</p> <p>We prefer hand-powered tools to electrical or fuel-powered ones.</p> <p>People who are not confident or proficient in their use and haven't been inducted by one of the co-ordinators won't use powered tools, such as a lawnmower.</p> <p>We will keep sharp tools sharp and keep them out of the way of children.</p> <p>We will collect and carry into the garden small hand tools, twine and labels in a small bucket/tub for just that use. This should also help prevent accidental loss, including in the compost bins.</p>
<p>F. Weather can be a risk to safety.</p>	<p>We won't carry out tasks in weather that is too cold, too wet, too hot or too sunny.</p> <p>We will provide shade and rain cover during sessions for a reasonable number of volunteers and garden users.</p> <p>Volunteers are responsible for bringing suitable clothing, insect repellent and sunscreen.</p>

Risk	Mitigation
<p>G. Food and water hygiene.</p>	<p>Volunteers should bring their own drinks and snacks, especially in hot weather. Garden co-ordinators can also provide cold drinks but should not be expected to.</p>
<p>H. Allergy risk and intolerances.</p>	<p>We will expect adult volunteers to tell garden co-ordinators about any allergies and intolerances.</p> <p>We won't offer children food and drink without checking with their responsible adult.</p> <p>We will take steps to prevent children helping themselves to food and drink: keeping it in a closed container and/or under adult supervision.</p>
<p>I. Trip hazards and falls. Garden users, including volunteers, might not have good eyesight or balance and can be unsteady.</p>	<p>Where possible, we will keep tools away from paths and they will be supervised by the person using them.</p> <p>Our volunteers need to be aware of their working area but also of visiting garden users approaching them.</p> <p>We will use electrical equipment safely and take suitable measures where cords could cause trip injuries.</p> <p>We will avoid making 'trenches' that could cause trip injury or wheel-chairs or scooters to fall down them.</p> <p>We avoid working at height. We only use step ladders and kick-steps when essential and with care.</p> <p>We avoid working in poor light – the garden is designed for daytime use.</p> <p>We aren't insured for work on the roof of the veranda. Only the two Garden Co-ordinators will maintain this, at their own risk.</p>
<p>J. Risk of drowning. There is a nature pond with sufficiently deep water to be a drowning risk.</p>	<p>During garden sessions, volunteers will aim to keep an eye out for small children in relation to the pond and also the water trough. We will supervise them if their responsible adult is not available. A sign on the garden gate advises of open water.</p>
<p>K. Risk of burns.</p>	<p>We can use an incinerator, rocket stove, gas-fired burner, storm kettle, firepit and BBQ but only rarely, and not on a regular basis during volunteering sessions. When any of these items are used, a co-ordinator will supervise it until it is cool.</p> <p>We will have fire gloves and a fire bucket available and will keep water nearby. There is a burns kit in the first aid.</p>

Risk	Mitigation
<p>L. Manual handling.</p>	<p>We will take care in the handling of heavy loads. Wheelbarrows are preferable to carrying heavy tubs of soil.</p>
<p>M. Over-exertion. It is easy to get carried away with a task and cause fatigue or injury.</p>	<p>We encourage volunteers to take frequent breaks, vary tasks and come back on another day to continue with a task. This is especially important in cold or hot weather. Volunteers should bring their own watery drinks and sugary snacks.</p>
<p>N. Eye and hearing injury.</p>	<p>We encourage volunteers who don't wear glasses to use safety glasses, especially for tasks where eye injury is more likely, such as lawnmowing and pruning shrubs. They need to bring their own. We don't use stakes or poles at heights that could cause injury, including after trips. They are safer when gathered into a wigwam or are raised well above eye level, for example in the raised beds. We don't routinely use machinery that is likely to damage hearing. If this does need to be used, we would use ear protectors.</p>
<p>O. Repetitive strain injury (RSI).</p>	<p>The tasks our gardeners carry out are unlikely to cause RSI.</p>
<p>P. Needle-stick injury. Public spaces can be used to dispose of drug paraphernalia.</p>	<p>It is possible that needles and syringes could be present in dense planting or waste bins. Volunteers are made aware of this risk. If we find drug equipment, we will isolate it without removal to reduce risk, for example by putting a plant pot or wheelbarrow placed over it with a sign. We will then call for help from the City Council: 01223 458 282 (or out of hours: 0300 303 8389). If someone has a needlestick injury, we will encourage them to allow the wound to bleed. They will also be asked to wash it in running water. The person will be asked to seek medical assistance including attendance at the Emergency Department of a hospital.</p>