

5 October 2020: this statement/policy has been revised in line with current guidance and rules for a period from 5 October 2020 until it requires further revisions

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.

The underlying principles to these changed guidelines include

- The **need to follow current guidance on social distancing**². In the garden, we'd like to aim for **2m as the desirable minimum distance**, unless this is not possible for a good reason.
- The aspiration to **not contaminate shared surfaces with virus** or pick up virus from shared surfaces.

Specific precautions to take:

- **People shouldn't volunteer (or come to the garden) if they have symptoms of COVID-19 (see current lists) or if they should be self-isolating.**
- If people have been asked to shield for their own protection but feel they and others will be safe they can choose to volunteer.
- Unless guidelines change, the number of people volunteering in one session will be **limited to six people**, including the co-ordinators. Because of the new 'rule of six' legislation, they need to be careful about 'mingling' with further garden users. Until otherwise advised, we interpret this to mean being within 2 m of someone for a prolonged period of time.
- Potential volunteers need to contact Rebecca before the session to **book a place**. If a session is cancelled Rebecca will contact them by text, e-mail or phone.
- During sessions, there will be **at least one garden co-ordinator**.
- Regular volunteers can choose to carry out VERY SAFE small tasks, like pruning and weeding, **in their own time and while the garden is open**. They will be responsible for their own safety during these times. They will need to bring their own tools but can use any provided buckets for waste materials. They should either sanitise these or consider them potentially contaminated.
- Volunteers must **use their own garden gloves** or, if this is not possible, ones provided to them and that are only used by them in future. They can be given a named bag to keep their gloves in. Gloves need to be worn for regular garden hazards.
- Volunteers are encouraged to **use their own hand tools** while in the garden and should not share them.
- Only the garden co-ordinators should go into the toolshed and club hut.

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

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

Nightingale Gardeners Health and Safety Statement/Policy

- Volunteers **shouldn't share larger garden equipment**. They should ask a garden co-ordinator for larger tools and not help themselves. There will be times when we don't have enough tools for every task.
- If volunteers need to share anything portable, it **needs to be cleaned between people and/or quarantined, by the co-ordinators, for 72 hours**. There is a container in the tool shed for quarantine, but the tools need to be given to a co-ordinator first.
- It would be preferable if volunteers **brought their own hand sanitiser** with them. We have only limited supplies of hand sanitiser, disposable gloves and wipes.
- Volunteers will be responsible for their safety travelling to the garden. They can choose to use public transport but need to follow current safety guidelines.
- Sessions will be short (up to two hours) so people don't become over-tired. Also, we won't have toilet access until the pavilion is rebuilt.
- Volunteers should avoid touching high-touch surfaces. If they handle the garden gate and padlock with bare hands, they should sanitise their hands. They should wash their hands when they return home.
- During sessions, each volunteer/household group will have their own garden tub and watering cans (where possible). These can be quarantined or cleaned between sessions and kept in the tool shed or club hut.
- Volunteers can use the veranda and polytunnel to keep their belongings and to take shelter in case of wet weather – but need to maintain social distancing.
- The polytunnel doors will be kept open for good ventilation. Garden users can also access the polytunnel so the surfaces should be considered as high touch.

H&S policy - general

Garden co-ordinators

In October 2020, there are two garden co-ordinators ('co-ordinators') Rebecca Jones and Julian Hickling. Co-ordinators are volunteers.

1. They are self-appointed when they, and the Group, feel they are reasonably confident and reliable to run a group volunteering session safely, including with help.
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.

Volunteering sessions – when they can take place

5. At least one co-ordinator is required to lead and supervise advertised sessions. If a garden co-ordinator isn't available, the session will be cancelled.
6. If the co-ordinators consider the weather to be unsafe for some or any tasks, they can cancel the session.
7. Between advertised sessions, the co-ordinators might carry out tasks in the garden; it is their choice if they invite others to join in.
8. Between advertised 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

9. 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.
10. The first aid kit will be suitable for a garden environment with just a few volunteers.
11. Volunteers must wear their own protective gardening gloves. We will provide disposable gloves for tasks such as painting.
12. 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. They need to be cleaned down after use.

Volunteers – suitability and matching to tasks

13. Before the risk of COVID-19, volunteering could be drop-in and could be one-off. During the risk of COVID-19, it is important that volunteers can trust other people they are working with and so we won't encourage drop-in volunteering but only after a period of induction, including about safety. We do not want the induction to be onerous, but people need to work safely for themselves and also others.
14. Volunteers must only attend the garden when they are well, without COVID symptoms and must follow current guidance/rules about isolating.

15. At a minimum, the volunteer needs 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 gardener 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 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.

Risk assessment

20. 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.
21. 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

22. We will aim to work in a way that is calm, tidy and clean.
23. The indoor areas have waste bins, which are emptied often.
24. We expect volunteers to return any tools that could be hazardous 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.
25. They must not leave tools unattended in the larger garden area or park where they might cause injury or get lost.
26. 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.

Events

27. 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 infection with coronavirus infection. Humans, especially when coughing or sneezing, and shared (especially high touch) surfaces can be a source of infection.</p>	<p>Volunteers must not attend the garden if they are feeling unwell or might have been infected with COVID-19. They shouldn't come if they need to self-isolate for any reason.</p> <p>Volunteers should bring their own gardening gloves. There are limited numbers of spare gloves, which can be reserved for their use only in a named bag.</p> <p>Where possible, volunteers should use their own small hand tools.</p> <p>Larger tools will be allocated to one volunteer only per session and must be cleaned thoroughly before replacing in the tool shed and/or quarantined in the designated container for at least 72 hours.</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 the risk of infection.</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.</p> <p>Volunteers are advised to bring their own dust masks and safety glasses before handling dusty compost.</p>
<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 actively sow or grow any plants with a very high risk, such as those with irritant sap.</p> <p>We will aim to remove such 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>Thicker gloves are available.</p>

Risk	Mitigation
	Gardeners can use loppers to pick up thorny material, which can be disposed of outside the main compost heap.
<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 or 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 be 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 small hand tools, twine and labels in a small bucket 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>
<p>G. Food and water hygiene.</p>	<p>While there is a risk of COVID-19, there will be no shared food or drink in the garden. Volunteers must bring their own drinks, can bring snacks but must not share them. They must retain physical distancing between themselves and people not in their household groups.</p>
<p>H. Allergy risk and intolerances. At least two of our regular volunteers are not allergic. One, less regular, volunteer has coeliac disease.</p>	<p>We will expect adult volunteers to tell garden co-ordinators of 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 or under adult supervision.</p>
<p>I. Trip hazards and falls. Garden users,</p>	<p>Where possible, we will keep tools away from paths and they will be supervised by the person using them.</p>

Risk	Mitigation
<p>including volunteers, might not have good eyesight or balance and can be unsteady.</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 kicksteps when essential and with care.</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 keep an eye out for small children in relation to the pond and also the water trough. We will supervise them, with social distancing, until their responsible adult is available. A sign on the garden gate advises of open water.</p> <p>We have a fixed cover on the mini-pond to prevent accidental injury.</p>
<p>K. Risk of burns.</p>	<p>We will use the rocket stove, gas-fired burner, storm kettle and BBQ rarely and a co-ordinator will supervise it.</p> <p>We will have fire gloves and a fire bucket available and nearby. There is a burns kit in the first aid.</p>
<p>L. Manual handling.</p>	<p>We will take care in the handling of heavy loads. Wheelbarrows are preferable to moving heavy tubs of soil. They are high touch and so shouldn’t be shared and gloves should be worn.</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.</p> <p>Volunteers should bring their own cold water 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.</p>

Risk	Mitigation
	<p>We don't use stakes at heights that could cause injury, including after trips. They are safer when gathered into a wigwam.</p> <p>We don't routinely use machinery that is likely to damage hearing. 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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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 then be taken to Addenbrooke's A&E.</p>

Appendix 1. Risk of catching COVID-19 from people who don't have symptoms but are infectious

Risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission in different settings

considering only asymptomatic individuals

Wearing face coverings, contact for a short time							
	Low occupancy				High occupancy		
	Outdoors, well ventilated	Indoors, well ventilated	Poorly ventilated		Outdoors, well ventilated	Indoors, well ventilated	Poorly ventilated
Silent	Low	Low	Low		Low	Low	Medium
Speaking	Low	Low	Low		Low	Low	Medium
Shouting, singing	Low	Low	Medium		Medium	Medium	High

Wearing face coverings, contact for a prolonged time							
	Low occupancy				High occupancy		
	Outdoors, well ventilated	Indoors, well ventilated	Poorly ventilated		Outdoors, well ventilated	Indoors, well ventilated	Poorly ventilated
Silent	Low	Low	Medium		Low	Medium	High
Speaking	Low	Low	Medium		Medium	Medium	High
Shouting, singing	Low	Medium	High		Medium	High	High

No face coverings, contact for a short time							
	Low occupancy				High occupancy		
	Outdoors, well ventilated	Indoors, well ventilated	Poorly ventilated		Outdoors, well ventilated	Indoors, well ventilated	Poorly ventilated
Silent	Low	Low	Medium		Medium	Medium	High
Speaking	Low	Medium	Medium		Medium	High	High
Shouting, singing	Medium	Medium	High		High	High	High

No face coverings, contact for a prolonged time							
	Low occupancy				High occupancy		
	Outdoors, well ventilated	Indoors, well ventilated	Poorly ventilated		Outdoors, well ventilated	Indoors, well ventilated	Poorly ventilated
Silent	Low	Medium	High		Medium	High	High
Speaking	Medium	Medium	High		High	High	High
Shouting, singing	Medium	High	High		High	High	High

Risk of transmission low  medium  high 

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