

Collings Park Community Garden – General Risk Assessment

Update 18 October 2025

Introduction

This document fulfils the Collings Park Trust's commitment to develop and maintain a generic risk assessment to cover foreseeable and repeatable tasks and activities, as stated in its Health and Safety Policy document. This document will be amended and added to as required, under the control of nominated Health & Safety Coordinators and the Secretary to the management committee.

Risk rating system

Consequence: What harm could happen as a result of the identified risk?

Descriptor	Examples
Insignificant	Injuries not requiring first aid
Minor	First aid required
Moderate	Medical treatment required
Major	Hospital admission required
Severe	Death or permanent disability to one or more persons

Likelihood: What is the likelihood of the determined consequence occurring?

Descriptor	Examples
Almost certain	Is expected to occur in most circumstances
Likely	Will probably occur in most circumstances
Possible	Could occur at some time
Unlikely	Not likely to occur in normal circumstances
Rare	May occur only in exceptional circumstances

Risk levels matrix

Likelihood	Consequences				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Rare	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
Possible	Low	Medium	High	High	Very high
Likely	Medium	Medium	High	High	Very high
Almost certain	Medium	High	High	Very high	Very high

Recommended action

NB: In all cases where risk is high or very high, the first option considered should be to do something differently, such that the risk initiator is no longer present. For instance, using a hand saw in lieu of a power-driven chain saw; building a scaffold tower rather than working from a ladder.

Very high / High: Consider the use of a specialist contractor who is better able to undertake the task due to their training, qualifications, experience and/or access to specialist equipment. In other cases act prior to the start of the activity to lower the risk level to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) by instigating the listed control measures as a minimum. Sign-on sheets to be used.

Medium: Proceed with caution, but actively seek methods of reducing the risk or eliminating it altogether.

Low: Continue as the activity progresses to seek ways of lowering the risk further or eliminating it altogether.

IDENTIFIED RISK	CONSEQUENCES	LIKELIHOOD	UNMITIGATED RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION/CONTROL MEASURES	MITIGATED RISK LEVEL
Use of Chainsaw	Severe: Deep laceration or amputation	Possible	Very High	• Ensure persons using the equipment have received appropriate training and obtained a relevant certificate of competence or national competence award relevant to the type of use. This to be recorded by a nominated H&S coordinator • Assess the working area to ensure it is clear of obstructions and segregated to prevent unauthorised access • Ensure that a specific risk assessment has been carried out and issued to the operator prior to commencing work • All identified PPE to be used throughout activity • Safety check activity incorporated into sign-on sheet • Ensure that equipment is maintained in good working order before use • Ensure that equipment is secured to prevent unauthorized use • First Aid kit available at site NB: Refer to HSE guidance on Use of Chainsaws INDG317	High (likelihood reduced to unlikely) Therefore aim to use specialist contractor

IDENTIFIED RISK	CONSEQUENCES	LIKELIHOOD	UNMITIGATED RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION/CONTROL MEASURES	MITIGATED RISK LEVEL
Use of mains electrically powered equipment	Severe: Electric shock or electrocution + see below for other risks	Possible	Very High	Protect from electrocution by always using a residual current device (RCD) when operating electrically powered equipment in the community garden + see below (dependent on type of equipment)	Medium (likelihood reduced to rare)

IDENTIFIED RISK	CONSEQUENCES	LIKELIHOOD	UNMITIGATED RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION/CONTROL MEASURES	MITIGATED RISK LEVEL
Use of sharp, power-driven cutting equipment, e.g. lawn mower, strimmer, brush cutter, hedge cutter, other similar power tools	Major: Deep lacerations broken bones	Possible	High	• Safety check activity incorporated into sign-on sheet. • Under 18s not to use power cutting tools • 18s & overs to be assessed for competence to use power tools by H&S Coordinator (with assistance from recognised competent person as necessary) and record completed prior to use • Volunteers using power tools MUST wear enclosed shoes, long sleeved top, long trousers and eye protection as a minimum, with other PPE requirements as dictated by a specific risk assessment or manufacturers' safety instructions (to be available on site). • Where a bladed tool is hand-held and the blade could impinge on the operator's legs (e.g. hedge trimmer), protective trousers or chaps MUST be worn. • Eye protection provided in secure store • Annual maintenance schedule for power-driven tools to ensure they are in good working order • Ensure that equipment is secured to prevent unauthorized use • First Aid kit available at site • No lone working	Medium (likelihood reduced to unlikely)

IDENTIFIED RISK	CONSEQUENCES	LIKELIHOOD	UNMITIGATED RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION/CONTROL MEASURES	MITIGATED RISK LEVEL
Use of sharp, non-powered equipment, e.g. saw, axe, pick-axe, secateurs, spade, knife	Moderate: Deep lacerations	Possible	High	• Safety check activity incorporated into sign-on sheet. • Volunteers using sharp, non-powered tools MUST wear enclosed shoes, long sleeved shirt, long trousers and eye protection as a minimum, with other PPE requirements as dictated by a specific risk assessment • Eye protection provided in secure store. • Annual check of tools to ensure they are in good working order • First Aid kit available at site	Medium (likelihood reduced to unlikely)
Working at height from steps or ladder	Major: Broken bones, internal injuries	Possible	High	• Use a stable working platform (e.g. scaffold tower) where feasible. • Check the condition of steps and ladders prior to use • Use ladders at a safe angle (1 in 4) • If working at any significant height from steps or a ladder then a second person should be present to stabilize (or 'foot') the steps/ladder • NB: If power-driven work equipment is to be used whilst working at height then a specific risk assessment should be carried out and appropriate additional control measures put in place	Medium (likelihood reduced to unlikely)

IDENTIFIED RISK	CONSEQUENCES	LIKELIHOOD	UNMITIGATED RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION/CONTROL MEASURES	MITIGATED RISK LEVEL
Use of pointed gardening tools: e.g. pick-axe, crowbar, garden fork	Major: Deep wounds	Possible	High	• Safety check activity incorporated into sign on sheet • Age-appropriate training provided for all under 18s / inexperience persons in safe use of gardening tools. • Active children encouraged to play away from main work area within garden • Annual inspection & maintenance of garden tools (e.g. check pick-axe heads) • First Aid kit available at site	Medium (likelihood reduced to unlikely)
Slips, trip hazards and uneven ground	Major: Sprains, broken bones	Possible	High	• Handrail installed adjacent to steps • General housekeeping, volunteers encouraged to store tools and equipment so that they cannot be tripped over • Volunteers encouraged to barricade and/or fill in uneven ground/holes • All gardening volunteers must wear enclosed shoes when on site • Regular safety check of site and prompt remedial action as required • Active children encouraged to play away from main gardening area • First Aid kit available at site	Medium (likelihood reduced to unlikely)

IDENTIFIED RISK	CONSEQUENCES	LIKELIHOOD	UNMITIGATED RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION/CONTROL MEASURES	MITIGATED RISK LEVEL
Contact with animal faeces	Major: Threat of ill health, which may be severe	Possible	High	- Encourage dog owners to bag and dispose of dog faeces - If animal faeces is found on site it should be moved to a place where it is unlikely to come into contact with garden users, e.g. 'flicked' into bushes	Medium (likelihood reduced to unlikely)
Use of hazardous substances	Major: Threat of ill health, which may be severe	Possible	High	- Follow manufacturers' instructions for use and storage of hazardous substances, keeping all hazardous materials out of the reach of children - Never transfer to alternative containers that could confuse and lead to poisonings - Wear appropriate personal protective equipment e.g. gloves, safety glasses, coveralls, personal respiratory equipment, etc. as recommended - Where appropriate, segregate areas where hazardous materials are being or have been used	Medium (likelihood reduced to unlikely)
Plant hazards, i.e. poisons and allergens	Major: Threat of poisoning and allergic reaction	Possible	High	- Selective planting - check plant labels for toxicity warnings / research donated plants - Use gloves when pruning or weeding and keep skin covered - If it is not a food plant, do not eat it, and teach children not to play with or eat growing plants - Warning information on display	Medium (likelihood reduced to unlikely)

IDENTIFIED RISK	CONSEQUENCES	LIKELIHOOD	UNMITIGATED RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION/CONTROL MEASURES	MITIGATED RISK LEVEL
Bonfires, barbecues, other forms of outdoor cooking	Major: Burns, smoke inhalation, uncontrolled fire	Possible	High	- Avoid uncontrollable fires by always siting bonfires and barbecues well away from fences, sheds and trees. Supervise children all the time when anywhere near a fire - Avoid smoke inhalation by standing upwind of bonfires. Avoid lighting bonfires in high winds - Follow sensible precautions when using a barbecue, pizza oven or similar. See ROSPA advice at: https://www.rospace.com/Home-Safety/Advice/General/Barbecue-Safety.aspx	Medium (likelihood reduced to unlikely)
Falling tree branches	Major: Broken bones; concussion	Rare	Medium	Annual check for unsafe branches and after periods of high wind. Initiate remedial action as required	Medium
Stings and bites – insects, spiders, ants, ticks, etc.	Minor: Swelling; pain; itching	Possible	Medium	- Wearing of long sleeved shirt, long trousers, gloves where appropriate to avoid exposure of bare skin, especially in long grass and similar - Use of insect repellent - First aid kit available at site	Medium (likelihood reduced to rare)
Vehicles	Major: Collision, injury to pedestrians/ passers-by from a vehicle in the garden area	Rare	Medium	- Very limited vehicular access, only through special arrangement with Plymouth City Council - Segregation of vehicles and pedestrians	Medium

IDENTIFIED RISK	CONSEQUENCES	LIKELIHOOD	UNMITIGATED RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION/CONTROL MEASURES	MITIGATED RISK LEVEL
Recreational hazards	Moderate: Injury from collision	Unlikely	Medium	- Advising public and local residents of timing of garden activities and events - Advising volunteers of the multi-functional nature of the area	Medium (likelihood reduced to rare)
Dog off lead attacking garden user	Moderate: Bites, mauls	Unlikely	Medium	- Request dog owners to keep their pets on lead within the community garden - Advise volunteers to stay away from dogs off lead - Any problem dogs to be reported to owners, and if necessary, Plymouth City Council	Medium (likelihood reduced to rare)
Excessive exposure to sun, high temperatures	Minor: Sunstroke, dehydration, sunburn	Possible	Medium	- Encourage wearing of hats in sunny weather - Use of 30+ SPF sun-screen protection - Encourage volunteers to bring and consume water or other fluid to reduce the risk of dehydration	Low (likelihood reduced to unlikely)
Use of gardening equipment such as trowels, other hand tools	Insignificant: Cuts, blisters, abrasions, chaffing	Possible	Low	- Encourage wearing of gloves - First Aid kit available on site	Low

IDENTIFIED RISK	CONSEQUENCES	LIKELIHOOD	UNMITIGATED RISK LEVEL	MITIGATION/CONTROL MEASURES	MITIGATED RISK LEVEL
Contact with soil, potting compost, decomposing material (compost)	Major: Legionellosis, Bioaerosols, Tetanus, Weil's disease	Unlikely	Medium	• Wear gloves whenever handling soil, compost, fertiliser or pesticides • Do not open bags of compost or potting media with head right over it, avoid potting-up in confined spaces, moisten dry potting media before use, and fold over the top of compost bags when not in use • Dampen down dry compost heap before turning/use • Consider wearing a dust mask when turning compost heaps and handling potting media • Avoiding storing potting media where it may heat up, as this may encourage Legionella • Keep water storage containers such as tanks and butts clean by emptying and sanitizing once a year • Wear gloves and keep arms covered when pruning plants that can cause irritations, e.g. Ivy, Fremontodendron, Euphorbia, Rue • Ensure tetanus jabs are up to date • Protect from water-borne diseases such as Weil's disease by wearing waterproof gloves, clothing and boots when clearing out ponds • Always wash your hands after gardening and especially before eating. Make hand sterilizing gel available	Medium (likelihood reduced to rare)

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