



Youth Volunteer Gardening Risk Assessment

A gardening risk assessment for young people involves identifying hazards like toxic plants, contaminated soil, and sharp tools, evaluating who might be harmed, and putting in place strict controls such as mandatory hand washing, up-to-date immunizations, strict tool supervision, and clear rules against putting plants in mouths.

1. Key Hazards & Control Measures

Understanding the most common risks helps in building a safe learning or play environment.

Hazard	Who is Harmed & How?	Safe Control Measures
Soil & Micro-organisms	Children face risks of tetanus, toxoplasmosis, or bacterial infections through cuts or hand-to-mouth contact.	Insist on wearing gardening gloves , covering any open cuts with plasters, and enforcing strict hand-washing after every session.
Toxic Plants & Berries	Ingestion of seeds (e.g., laburnum), berries, or leaves causes poisoning, sickness, or severe allergic reactions.	Explicitly teach youths never to put plant material in their mouths. Safely remove, fence off, or closely supervise any areas containing toxic plants or known irritants (like nettles or rue).
Tools & Equipment	Cuts, splinters, or eye injuries from sharp gardening tools or low tree branches.	Ensure all tools are sized appropriately, lock away sharp items (secateurs, trowels) when not in use, prune low branches, and wear eye protection when cutting or pruning.
Slips, Trips & Falls	Muddy areas, loose gravel, or uneven paths lead to bruises, sprains, or falls.	Clean up excess soil spilt around raised beds to prevent slipping. Create rules for walking on wet grass, and ensure youths wear appropriate, sturdy footwear.
Insects & Chemicals	Allergic reactions from wasp/bee stings, or exposure to harsh pesticides.	Always use organic/safe fertilisers instead of chemical sprays. Check for nests before sessions and be aware of any volunteers with known anaphylactic allergies.

2. The 5-Step Assessment Process

Follow standard safety principles to keep the area safe:

1. **Identify Hazards:** Walk the garden area specifically looking for the risks outlined above.
2. **Decide Who is at Risk:** Evaluate which youths might be vulnerable (e.g., those with severe allergies, asthma from hay fever).
3. **Evaluate and Control:** Decide if the risk is high, medium, or low, and implement necessary physical controls or supervision rules.
4. **Record Findings:** Document the control measures you have taken.
5. **Review:** Regularly update your assessment as seasons change or as new plants grow.