



If you are not a member of school staff, running a gardening club for the first time can be quite a daunting prospect! So here are some tips from experienced garden club leaders that hopefully will help with the smooth running of the club.

1. Try to plan in advance what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. If you have access to a white/chalk board it is helpful for you and the children if you put up what you're doing in the session.
2. Try and learn the children's names as quickly as possible and fill in a register so that you feel in charge.
3. Try to ensure that you have activities that all the children can do, and some spare things for if they finish early.
4. Try to involve the children in getting everything out, putting it away and tidying it up. This is a useful part of them learning how to be responsible for a garden.
5. Wait for the children to stop talking before you start talking.
6. Establish firm boundaries from the beginning of what is and isn't acceptable. You don't have to spend ages doing this. Establish a few essential rules such as 'no talking while I'm talking' and behaving safely with the garden tools and then mention the others as they come up.
7. Remember it is a club, you are a volunteer, and only well-behaved children can attend. You are not obliged to work with children who aren't behaving to your expectations (although you have to keep them until they are collected) but if they haven't behaved well, have a chat with the child concerned and tell them they are welcome to attend if they behave. Have a member of staff who you can go to if there is a problem.
8. Praise the behaviour you do want. This helps to create a positive working environment.
9. When giving an instruction, start the sentence off by saying 'When I have finished speaking...' followed by the instruction.
10. Most teachers employ some sort of cue that tells children to stop and listen without shouting at them. Some tip a rain stick upside down, some clap, some put their finger on their lips or their hand in the air. Tell the children what the cue is, carry out the action and then wait for the children. Mention the ones who have noticed.
11. Turn work into a game e.g. 'I wonder who can pick the most weeds?' or 'I wonder which group can clear up the fastest?'
12. At the end of the session try to spend a few moments thinking about what went well and what didn't. Plan what you would do differently next time. Try not to lose heart if a session doesn't go as well as planned!

Behavioural Guidelines

A great way to start the first meeting of the club is to discuss with the children what is and isn't acceptable behaviour in the garden. They will come up with good ideas but here are some you might like to raise as a starting point.

- The children need to be sensible with the tools so as not to hurt themselves or others – demonstrate how you would like them used and stored. They need to allow enough room between each other to work safely.
- They mustn't eat anything unless you have told them it is safe (see Potential Wildlife hazards section p 59) and not put their hands in their mouths and/or eyes etc until washed.
- They need to walk in the garden.
- They should wear gloves where possible and always wash hands at the end of the session.



Conducting a Risk Assessment



It is very important when working with children in schools that the level of risk is assessed, especially if you are a volunteer and the activity is carried out after school. It is likely that the school will have its own risk assessments and if so, please ask to see a copy. The following information is taken from Five Steps to Risk Assessment by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf.

What is a Risk Assessment?

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what in your work could cause harm to other people – in this case, children in your care and other adult helpers. The risk assessment allows you to weigh up whether you have done everything in your power to reduce the risks (the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be) or whether you should take more precautions to prevent harm.

Your school should have someone whose job it is to look at health and safety so ask them for help.

The Five Steps

Step 1 - Identify the Hazards (anything that may cause harm)

- Walk around the gardening patch and look what could reasonably be expected to cause harm.
- Ask the children and other adults what they think and involve them in the risk assessment. They may have noticed things that you haven't.
- Visit the HSE website (www.hse.gov.uk). This has practical guidance on what the hazards are and how to control them
- Look back at the accident book for the school. This will provide you with historical information on what has happened in the past and will guide you in looking for potential hazards.

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how

This will mainly be the children and the other adults involved in the gardening club but check whether there are other site users around at the same time.

Step 3 - Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Having spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. The law requires you to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. Ask yourself, can I get rid of this risk altogether? If not, how can I control this risk so that harm is unlikely?

Step 4 - Record your findings and implement them

Share your findings with the Head Teacher and the staff at the school and see if you have missed anything. You must be able to show that:

- a proper check was made
- you asked who might be affected
- you dealt with significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low
- you have involved the Head and the other teachers.

Step 5 - Review your assessment and update if necessary

With schools it is probably a good idea to update your risk assessment each term. It is likely that you won't need to alter it too much once you have done it, but the hazards may alter with the seasons.



Specific Risks Associated with Gardening



Poisonous Plants

If you come across poisonous or hazardous plants on site, show them to the children, so that they will recognise them again, before removing and disposing of them safely. Ensure that you talk to the children often about not eating anything unless they are sure what it is and that it is safe (see potential Wildlife Hazards section p 59).

Tools

Flower Pots

Statistically these are the second most dangerous tool in the garden, causing 5,300 accidents, with falls, cuts and lifting injuries some of the most common types of accident recorded!

(www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/basics/techniques/safety_prevent_accidents)

Spades, Forks, Rakes, Hoes, Hand Tools

- When carrying forks or rake, children should carry the tool horizontally at the point of balance with the dangerous prongs pointing backwards. This gives the children a greater degree of control over the spade or fork and ensures they can see the dangerous bit and move it out of the way if someone is coming towards them.
- Spades, forks and rakes should be left flat on the ground between uses with the prongs pointing downwards. Many accidents occur by people stepping on rakes where the prongs are pointing upwards and however comic this might be, it can cause injuries, even concussion!

Protective Clothing and Sun Safety

- Ensure that the children have gardening gloves if they need them and are wearing closed toe shoes.
- They shouldn't use hands for shovelling soil as there could be broken glass and tree roots in amongst the soil.
- Allow the children to use old cushions/curtains for kneeling on when they are digging in the garden. In hot weather ensure that the children;
- wear sun hats.
- have water to drink.
- Are wearing sunscreen.

Ideas for Tool Safety Talk

1. Carry tools at the point of balance.
2. Use the heel or ball of the foot when digging to avoid damaging the arch of the foot.
3. Press down with the foot, don't kick the spade or fork.
4. Ensure the handle of each tool is secure.
5. When not using tools lay them flat down on the ground, out of the way of the walkways and with prongs or blades facing downwards.
6. Hang tools up in the potting shed if possible or fill a barrel with some sand mixed with a small amount of engine oil and place the tools in this, blade facing down.
7. Ensure that you lock knives, edging tools and secateurs away when they are not being used.

Ideas to Make Safety Talks More Interesting

Repeating the same thing about tools each week to the children may cause them switch off, so here are some ideas to make it more fun!

- Make yourself a list of all the things you want to say about tool safety and laminate it. Then get the children to take it in turns to give the tool safety talk.
- As the children get accustomed to the tool safety talk, get one to give the talk without any help and get another child to tick off each point as they mention it and give them a score for how many points they remembered.



Possible Grants Available for Community Gardens



B & Q operate a waste donation scheme where they will donate waste materials such as tins of paint, timber, and end of lines to local schools. There are branches in Stroud, Gloucester and Cheltenham.

The Co-operative Membership Community Fund will donate £100-£2,000. It has to benefit the community and be in line with cooperative principles. A school cannot apply but a PTA can. For more details go to www.co-operative.coop/membership/local-communities/community-fund/funding-selection-criteria/

Some **Parish Councils** give grants to the community. Contact your Parish Council to ask. If they don't give grants themselves they may keep a list of other small local funding pots which may be available to schools.

Awards for All is funded by the National Lottery. It has to be a community project and community involvement has to be demonstrated. Up to £10,000 is available. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/Awards-For-All

Gloucestershire County Council Funding Bulletin is available at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/externalfunding

Innovation in Ecological Education

This grant is for innovation in ecological education. Although it does not directly fund community or school gardens it may fund innovative ecological work. The aim of this programme is to promote good practice and to support ecology teaching that is both exciting and intellectually stimulating. Funding is available to encourage teachers to develop innovative ways of teaching ecology and/or undertake research to evaluate methods of teaching ecology. Level of Funding: Up to £1,500. There are two deadlines per year; 15 March & 15 September.

Further information www.britishecologicalsociety.org/grants/education/iee.php





Check List for Schools supporting the Garden Club Leader



When working with a parent/volunteer who is not an existing member of staff, it is important that they have as much knowledge as possible to aid the smooth running of the club. Or if you are a volunteer running the club for the first time, it is helpful to get as much advance information from the school. Below is a checklist of some useful questions.

- Is the leader CRB checked?
- Is there a member of school staff as the main point of contact?
- Does the leader know the fire procedures?
- Is the leader first aid trained?
- Do they know what their first aid responsibilities are?
- Do they know where the first aid box is?
- Are they aware of any medical conditions/behavioural issues regarding the children in the club?
- Do they have an allocated room if the weather is too bad to go outside?
- Do they know the location of the toilets that they can use?
- Do they know where the children's toilets are?
- Is there access to the garden/ tool shed or access to keys if they are locked?
- Do they know where to leave muddy wellies, clothing etc?
- Is there access to brooms, dust pan & brushes?
- Is there a procedure for collecting children at the beginning & end of the session?