



Build Your Own Garden Safety Matrix



Working Outside

Risk Factor	Is this risk in the environment? (Check box for yes)	Conversation topics	Checklist Language
Weather		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize signs of heat stroke. Ensure all participants use appropriate weather protection. Allow children to rest when tired. Children should wear wide brimmed hats. 	
Water Features		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind children to stay alert of their surroundings and check their whereabouts often. If children who are unable to swim consistently participate in garden activities, consider building a barrier around any water features to protect all participants. 	
Pests		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to bug repellent. Maintain documentation of known insect allergies through permission slips. Document known allergies in a location convenient for garden leaders to read. Make sure unwelcome reptiles and rodents are not present when children are in the garden. Implement pest control measures and make sure they are followed. 	
Skin irritants		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document all known allergies in a location convenient for garden leaders to read. Maintain documentation of known skin irritants through permission slips. Regularly review and update documents. Send children to the nurse at the first sign of skin irritation. 	

Hand harvesting fruits and vegetables

Risk Factor	Is this risk in the environment? (Check box for yes)	Conversation topics	Checklist Language
Sharp tools		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish appropriate age ranges for use of standard sized garden tools. • Provide alternative, child appropriate tools as necessary. • Label tools so that all participants know what side should stay directed towards the ground. • Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves when using tools with a blade or cutting edge. • Provide PPE such as glasses or other eye protection if using tools that create airborne fragments. • Model appropriate tool use at all times. • Establish a system for consistent safety check-ins 	
Sun exposure and heat stroke		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children should wear light colored clothes and wide brimmed hats. • Instruct everyone on how to recognize signs of heat stroke and what to do in the case of an emergency. • Provide access to shade. • Ensure breaks from heat and sun are taken consistently. 	
Repetitive motion		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotate tasks between children during long work periods to prevent repetitive motion injuries. 	
Cross contamination		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always use clean tools and equipment. • Wash all harvested produce with potable water and store in sanitized food grade containers. • Children involved in harvest should practice good hand washing practices and wash their hands before and after working with the harvest. • Do not store tools until they have been properly cleaned. 	
Eating unwashed or unripe products		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach kids and participants proper handwashing techniques (<i>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides printable posters for visual cues</i>). • Instruct kids that it is important to only eat washed produce and that sampling will happen as a group once harvested items are clean. 	

Harvesting tree fruit and climbing

Risk Factor	Is this risk in the environment? (Check box for yes)	Conversation topics	Checklist Language
Heavy lifting		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy lifting should only be performed by older children or garden leaders. • Recommend that children work in pairs to prevent injury. 	
Falling		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend that everyone work in pairs to prevent injury. • Children and volunteers should wear appropriate clothing including non-skid shoes, sturdy gloves and well-fitting clothing. • Activities that require the use of ladders or climbing should only be completed by older children or garden leaders • Ensure a spotter is available when older children use the ladder. 	
Sharp Tools		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a clear labeling system for tools meant for child use and those reserved for adult use. • Sharp tools should not be raised above waist level when being used in active areas. This helps children maintain control of their tools at all times. 	
Broken Tools		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly check for broken or dull tools. • If a tool is broken, splintering, has defects, or is damaged in some other ways remove it from rotation until it has been appropriately repaired. 	

Personal hygiene

Risk Factor	Is this risk in the environment? (Check box for yes)	Conversation topics	Checklist Language
Open wounds		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All open wounds must be properly covered to prevent contamination. Children with a wound that is not covered should either visit the nurse for treatment, or wait to work in the garden once the wound is healed. 	
Contaminated shoes and clothing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check shoes and clothing for signs of animal feces prior to any child or adult entering the garden. 	
Dirty hands and tools		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice good handwashing techniques. Provide access to adequate handwashing facilities including single use towels. If handwashing facilities are only available inside a building away from the garden, ensure that children understand that everyone will walk to the facilities to wash hands before and after working in the garden. Instruct leaders and educators in this practice so students arrive ready to work in the garden with clean hands. 	
Allergic reactions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document all known allergies in a location convenient for garden leaders to read. Maintain documentation of all known allergens including skin irritants and insects as mentioned above through permission slips. 	
Illness		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kids and volunteers should not display signs of illness for 24 hours prior to participation in hands on garden harvest activities. If a child starts displaying signs of illness while participating in garden activities instruct them to visit the nurse for treatment. 	



**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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