

Let's get growing

GROW

Tools for developing a garden safety checklist



TEXAS FARM FRESH INITIATIVE

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE | COMMISSIONER SID MILLER



Gardens in schools and child care centers have taken root all across Texas. Growing a garden for kids to enjoy is a fun way to participate in the Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) Farm Fresh Initiative.

Research has shown that if kids are involved in growing fruits and vegetables, they are more willing to try them and like them!

Let's ^{get} growing



GROW is the second tool in TDA's Let's Get Growing series. GROW was created to help you develop a safety checklist that meets your specific needs and will support active learning experiences in the garden.



ONE-STOP SHOP: GARDEN PROGRAM *support*

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MAKE SAFETY A *Priority*

USING A SAFETY CHECKLIST PROVIDES A BASIC SAFETY PROTOCOL FOR PREVENTING INJURIES AND ENSURING THAT GARDENS ARE EFFECTIVE AND SAFE.



Before developing a safety checklist for your garden setting, consider the following:



Age groups using the garden



Purpose of the garden — learning, taste testing, growing food for food service or a combination



Person or persons designated as primary coordinator or coordinators



Existing organizational policies that support the garden safety protocol



Seasonal changes in garden activity

Use these considerations to determine the safety items on your checklist. It is possible that one checklist is adequate for all garden visitors.

Set the tone for safety success



Students and children working in a garden are learning new skills and gaining new experiences. It is important to make safety part of the learning experience.

- Provide immediate feedback if children complete tasks incorrectly or in an unsafe manner.
- Always model appropriate behavior.
- Avoid assigning tasks that are not suitable for the child's ability or age level.
 - Refer to **Community-Based Agriculture: Safety Guidelines for Youth Working in Gardens** on www.NAGCAT.org for recommendations of age appropriate tasks in the garden.
- Teach volunteer and child participants to recognize and respond appropriately to risks.





SAFE GARDENING *Practices*

YOUR SAFETY CHECKLIST
Use this list of risks and hazard avoidance steps to help plan your garden safety checklist.



Working outside

Do not work in the garden if extreme weather is in the forecast. Instead, take advantage of the many opportunities for classroom learning.

RISK FACTOR	RECOMMENDATION
WEATHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to recognize signs of heat stroke and have a plan for responding in the case of an emergency. • Ensure all participants use appropriate weather protection. • Allow children to rest when they indicate they are tired and when you observe signs of tiring. • Pay close attention to the time of exposure to weather elements.
WATER FEATURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind children to stay aware of their surroundings and check their whereabouts often. • 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 all 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 ensure they are well-maintained.
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. • If you notice any skin irritation on a child, send them to the nurse for treatment.



Harvesting fruits and vegetables

RISK FACTOR	RECOMMENDATION
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 often as necessary. • Label tools so that all participants know what side should stay directed toward 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 handwashing 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 (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides printable posters for visual cues). • Instruct kids that it is important to only eat washed produce and that sampling will happen as a group once harvested items are clean.



SAFETY CHECKLIST Template

DOWNLOAD TDA'S BUILD-YOUR-OWN SAFETY CHECKLIST template at www.SquareMeals.org/Gardens to create your personalized checklist for use by garden participants of all ages and experience levels.





Harvesting tree fruit and climbing

RISK FACTOR	RECOMMENDATION
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 works in pairs to prevent injury. • Children and volunteers should wear appropriate clothes 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 way remove it from rotation until it has been appropriately repaired.



Personal hygiene

RISK FACTOR	RECOMMENDATION
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.

Putting best practices into action

Post the safety checklist in a location that is easily visible to garden leaders and children to serve as a regular reminder. If young children will be in the garden, consider including safety practice illustrations or photos.

Safety reminders can be posted in the classroom where they will be visible right before children go out into the garden. Teachers may be willing to go through a short checklist with students prior to their gardening activities, so students arrive prepared and ready to learn!

Other resources

Many resources exist that can help inform your safety protocol. TDA has identified the following tools to help supplement GROW.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The CDC provides recommendations to parents and family members working with young children in a garden setting. Similar language may be used in your own garden safety protocol. www.CDC.gov/family/gardening

North American Guidelines for Children's Agricultural Tasks

The North American Guidelines for Children's Agricultural Tasks can answer many common questions about age-appropriate jobs and responsibilities. Their goal is to help kids do their job safely. www.NAGCAT.org

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service


The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Gardening and Landscaping page provides extensive information on how and when to plant fruits and vegetables best-suited for the Texas climate and soil. www.AgriLifeExtension.Tamu.edu



SHARE YOUR
SUCCESS *today*

Inspire others with your best practices and learning opportunities. Share your garden program successes and photos with TDA by emailing LocalProducts.SquareMeals@TexasAgriculture.gov.



A woven basket filled with fresh vegetables, including several bright orange carrots, several large red beets with their leafy tops, and a few green beans. The basket is set against a background of lush green foliage.

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Let's get growing

GROW TODAY!



This resource provides ideas to build your own safety checklist for the garden. Using the recommendations in GROW can help ensure that every garden experience is safe and educational.

Your partners at the Texas Department of Agriculture support your efforts to increase young Texans' connections with local products and agriculture. Learn more about TDA's Farm Fresh Initiative at www.SquareMeals.org/TexasFarmFresh and access additional resources and training materials. You may also connect with your local Education Service Center for technical assistance.



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Fraud Hotline: 1-866-5-FRAUD-4 or 1-866-537-2834 | P.O. Box 12847 | Austin, TX 78711
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This product was funded by USDA.
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Updated 1/11/2022
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