

Ballina Community Gardens – Occupational Health and Safety

POLICY (Version 1 – 10 June 2011)

OHS Commitment

The Ballina Community Gardens (BCG) is fully committed to the health, safety and the welfare of all people attending the gardens, either as workers, volunteers, contractors, or visiting members of the public.

We will make every reasonable effort to make sure the BCG is free of risk and that there are procedures in place to manage and control any potentially dangerous situations, procedures, equipment or products.

We have also developed an OHS Kit for use in the BCG to help make the garden safer for all and to assist in reporting and addressing any dangers that may arise for all users of the garden. This kit will include reporting forms to ensure all users can take an active role in identifying and reporting hazards. The policy and kit are available for download from the website (www.ballinacommunitygardens.com)

OHS Representatives

All BCG users have a responsibility to make sure the gardens are a safe place to attend. Due to the nature of the BCG all committee members accept the role of reporting representatives for OHS matters. Garden users should report to any of the committee members if they find any hazardous/dangerous situations so that the matter may be addressed. The list of current committee members is posted on the website and is located near the sign in book at the garden. All users are not only encouraged to report hazards, but also to provide feedback on ways to improve safety in the garden as a whole. All input to the safety of the gardens is appreciated.

Our Responsibilities

- a) To ensure the BCG premises (grounds and buildings including access and egress) are safe without risk to health.
- b) To ensure that any equipment, plant/tools and substances are safe and without risk to health.
- c) To ensure that all new members, volunteers and contractors working at BCG will be given an OHS Induction. This is a short talk to ensure that everyone is aware of the hazards associated with working in a garden environment.
- d) To provide information, training, instruction and supervision where necessary on the use of plant and equipment to ensure health and safety of users.
- e) To ensure the health and safety of contractors and other visitors to the BCG.

Your Responsibilities

- a) To take reasonable care for the health and safety of others who may be affected by your actions.
- b) To co-operate with the BCG committee by following directions, instructions, and complying with procedures to ensure your safety and the safety of others.
- c) You must use and maintain tools and equipment safely and properly.
- d) Wear appropriate safety and personal protection equipment
- e) Take notice of signs and posted safety information
- f) To not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when working in the garden.
- g) Notify the BCG committee of any hazards or potential hazards immediately.

OHS Kit: (All forms available at BCG or download from the website.)

Incident/Injury/Near Miss/Hazard - Reporting Form

Safe Work Procedure - Form

Risk Assessment Premises - Form

Risk Assessment Items – Form

Member Induction Form

Contractor/Visitor/Volunteer Acknowledgement Form

Participation Waiver and Medical Authorisation - Form

(President) On behalf of the
BCG Committee 2011

General OHS Information for all BCG Users

Identifying Hazards

Hazards are everywhere around us. Before commencing a task it is a good idea to carefully assess the situation for possible risks to health and safety.

Things you should take into account when assessing risks include:

- Your immediate environment
- The materials you are working with
- The tools and equipment you are using
- Your own health and well being

Some examples of hazards in the garden environment include excessive sun exposure, insect bites, injury from use of tools, inhalation of spores in soil and back strain from inappropriate lifting techniques.

The Cost of Failure

If hazards are ignored or not properly assessed and as a result an accident occurs this can impact not just on yourself but also on the people around you including:

- Other volunteers and members
- Visitors and members of the public

Impacts could include:

- Serious injury to yourself and others
- Claims for damages against you
- Replacement costs to damaged items/equipment
- Temporary or permanent closure of the project

Working Safely

No matter how careful we are, accidents still sometimes occur. We can minimise the risk of accidents by:

- Following OH&S guidelines
- Applying commonsense
- Being aware of others and of the hazards around us
- Wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment
- Cooperating with all other members and volunteers
- Reporting problems such as damaged tools
- Working in a safe and responsible manner

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is provided for your own health and safety. Please wear the appropriate PPE at all times, depending on the tasks you are undertaking and ensure it is clean and replaced after use. PPE provided by the BCG, **when the facilities are officially open for communal gardening or on working bees**, includes:

- Ear muffs
- Dust masks
- Safety Glasses
- Gardening gloves
- Sunscreen

Please let us know if these become worn out so that they can be replaced.

There is some Personal Protective Equipment that you are required to provide for yourself **during private plot maintenance and out of official communal gardening hours**. This includes:

- Long trousers (to be worn when mowing or whipper snipping)

- A broad-brimmed hat for sunny days
- A shirt with covered shoulders
- Covered shoes
- Gardening gloves
- Sunscreen
- Ear Muffs (if required)
- Dust Masks (if required)
- Safety Glasses (if required)
- First Aid kit

Manual Handling

Severe injury can be sustained through the simple act of lifting or carrying heavy loads in the wrong way. To avoid such accidents occurring, please follow these guidelines:

- Be aware of your limitations. If in doubt ask someone for help
- Plan the lift. If necessary use a trolley or wheelbarrow
- Ensure the work area and pathway is free of slipping and tripping hazards
- Check the load for sharp edges. Wear protective clothing if necessary as well as gloves and covered shoes
- Ensure you have a stable footing that allows for even distribution of weight. The front foot should be beside the object, pointing in the direction of travel. The back foot should be slightly behind and hip width from the front foot
- Ensure you have a secure hold of the object before lifting
- Bend from the knees to get down to the level of the load and use the legs to lift
- Keep your back straight!
- Keep the head raised – this ensures your spine remains straight and you can see where you are going
- Keep arms as close to the body as possible
- Don't change your grip while carrying and directly face the spot where the load will eventually rest

Slips, Trips and Falls

- Don't carry objects that obstruct your view when walking
- Ensure pathways, driveways, gates and doorways are free of clutter and trip hazards.
- Replace equipment in the appropriate location as soon as practicable after use.
- Clean up spills immediately or mark off their existence.
- Rope off any construction area if required to leave the site to ensure others safety.
- Report any loose paving, steps, timber edging or damaged fencing immediately.
- Use ladders when working at height.

Working with Soils and Compost

Soils, mulches and composts all contain particulates, fungal spores and bacteria that can damage your lungs and/or carry disease. When working with these substances it is important to avoid inhaling the dust. A dust mask should be worn to avoid any risk to your health.

Using Hand Tools

Hand Tools such as mattocks, shovels and rakes should be used with care and attention.

- Check that tools are in good repair before using
- Use tools only for the purpose they were intended
- Be aware of where other members and volunteers are working
- Always wear appropriate PPE, especially strong, covered shoes or boots
- Report any damaged tools immediately

Sun Sense

The risk of sunburn and sunstroke, with the resulting possibility of developing melanomas and other skin cancers, is probably the most common risk associated with outdoor activity. It is probably also the most ignored. While working in the BCG please observe the following:

- Regularly apply sunscreen

- Cover up: a shirt that covers your shoulders and a broad brimmed hat are essential on sunny days
- While working in the sun there is also the risk of dehydration so please ensure that you drink plenty of fluids and take regular short breaks.

Using the Mower

Using a mower can be dangerous when the user is inexperienced or lacking in common sense. Please observe the following when using the lawn mower:

- Carefully check the mower before starting the engine to ensure that it has adequate fuel and oil and that there is no visible damage
- Check the area you will be mowing for any objects that might be hidden in the long grass
- Ensure that other people are well out of range of flying debris
- Ensure that you wear the appropriate PPE, including covered shoes (preferably steel-cap safety boots), long pants, ear muffs and safety glasses
- DO NOT use the lawn mower if you have never used one before; request assistance

Using the Whipper-snipper

The whipper-snipper should be used with the same level of caution as the lawn mower. Ensure that you:

- Carefully check the whipper snipper before starting the engine to ensure that it has adequate fuel and oil and that there is no visible damage
- Check the area you will be working in for any objects that might be hidden in the long grass
- Ensure that other people are well out of range of flying debris
- Ensure that you wear the appropriate PPE, including covered shoes (preferably steel-cap safety boots), long pants, ear muffs and safety glasses
- DO NOT use the whipper snipper if you have never used one before; request assistance

Snake, Spiders and Creepy Crawlies

Not all insects and reptiles are bad but some of them do bite. Be aware of this and follow the following precautions:

- Wear safety boots at all times and long pants when working in long grass or near water
- Know where the First Aid kit is located, near the sign on book.
- If a snake or spider bites you do not panic. Sit down immediately and call for help. Do not continue walking around
- Always wear gloves when reaching into enclosed spaces
- If you see a snake, walk away slowly and carefully
- Avoid working around swampy areas after rain to avoid mosquitoes
- There is a cream for insect bites in the First Aid kit

Evacuation & Reporting

- Familiarize yourself with the evacuation area for the site in case of an emergency.
(Grassed area next to the Council pump station (large cream shed) on the corner of Swift and Clarence Sts.)
- Familiarize yourself with the location of telephone numbers/forms for reporting hazards, incidents, injury, near misses and the numbers for emergency services (fire, police, ambulance) located near the first aid kit.