

School Garden Safety Rules and Tips

CONTACT:

For all questions regarding the garden rules, call your garden coordinator.

name:

phone number:

Contents

General Garden Rules

Safety Rules to Protect People

Tips to Protect the Garden

Tips for Working with Kids in the Garden

General Garden Rules

- Adhere to organic growing practices. The Bethlehem Elementary School Garden is an organic garden. Do not use synthetic chemical pesticides or fertilizers like miracle-Gro. If you are not sure if something is allowed, please check with the garden coordinator.
- Keep feet on pathways. Do not stand in garden beds.
- Do not stand on the wooden raised bed frames.
- Do not hang or climb on stakes, poles, or trellises intended for plants.
- Do not harvest without permission from the garden coordinator.
- Add only plant materials to garden compost to keep out vermin.
- Keep all fertilizers and pest control products, organic or not, stored securely out of reach from children and pets, and preferably in a cool, dark place.
- Make sure the water is turned off before you leave the garden.
- Make sure tools are put away before you leave the garden.
- If fenced, keep the garden gate securely shut to keep pets and wild animals out.

Safety Rules to Protect People

- Use of senses for plant identification and exploration
 - It is okay to smell, look, and listen in the garden!
 - Before you touch:
 - Be careful of thorns such as on raspberries, roses, and cleome
 - Some people get a skin rash from touching certain plant parts on tomatoes, parsnips, raspberries...
 - Don't taste anything until you are sure it is food, and that you are not allergic. Always try new foods in small amounts.
- Know which plants have both edible and poisonous parts. When in doubt, do not taste! A few examples of poisonous plant parts:
 - Leaves of rhubarb are poisonous but the stalk is edible.
 - The tomato plant itself is poisonous but the fruits are edible.
 - Many flowers have medicinal properties (aka poisonous) such as monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*), chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*), bleeding heart (*digitalis*), snakeroot (*cimicifuga*)

- Know which gardeners have allergies to plants, pollen, or stings and act accordingly.
- Keep a supply of sunscreen (know if anyone is allergic to sunscreen).
- In high heat, have gardeners wear hats and shirts with sleeves.
- Drink plenty of water when working in the garden, especially on hot, sunny days.
- No bare feet or flip flops in the garden. Wear proper shoes to protect from cuts and stings.

Tips to Protect the Garden

- Install sturdy posts to act as hose guides to protect plants.
- Use scissors or pruners when harvesting to get a clean cut. Plants heal easier when the break is clean.
- Use two hands to pick fruit or flowers from plants so you don't accidentally uproot them, one is to hold the plant and the other is to nip off with scissors or pruners.
- Flowers: The more you pick, the more fall flowers you will have. See the Deadheading tip in Gardening Tips section of your School Garden Guidebook.
- Weeds: Get to know your common garden weeds and be sure it is not a baby garden plant before you pull it out. See the Common Garden Weeds section of your School Garden Guidebook.
- Mulch: Mulch with leaves, grass clippings, or hay to reduce water evaporation and unwanted weeds.
- Insect pests: Get to know your good bugs and bad bugs before you kill any insects. See the Good Bug/Bad Bug section of your School Garden Guidebook.
 - Keep a jar of salty, soapy water around to collect pest insects like japanese beetles, rose chafers, slugs, or cabbage worms. Refresh the solution often or it will smell gross!
 - Scout your plants weekly (at least) looking for:
 - Insect damage on the leaves
 - Insect eggs, usually on the underside of leaves.
 - Insect larvae. Get a positive identification before you squish or add to the soapy water solution.

Tips for Working with Kids in the Garden (See also Safety Rules to Protect People)

- When watering:
 - Have 3 kids on the hoses, and rotate positions so one is controlling the water and two are preventing the hose from knocking over the plants.
- When using tools:
 - Stay your arm's length plus the tool length away from the next person
 - Walk, do not run, while holding tools
 - Identify which tools are for adults only
- If there is an after school club when no nurse is on duty, have:
 - Parents sign consent forms
 - All potential allergies recorded and appropriate first-aid needs.
 - A basic first aid kit on hand and drinking water