

Boeders Gardening News.

This edition focuses entirely on safety in your garden. Your garden is a familiar place and sometimes it is easily forgotten that your garden should be maintained in a condition conducive to safe use. Garden safety is very much about common sense and thinking about what you do as well as how you go about it. More often than not, the knowledge is there in your mind and just needs a quick refresh on gardening safely.

Boeders Garden Design Team have put together the following refresher tips and ideas to help ensure you avoid the risk of a gardening mishap.

Tool Use



Even the best garden devotee will be keenly aware how easy it is to become distracted in the garden. It is on these occasions that our minds lapse on the guidelines for good gardening safety and you are at most risk of leaving tools, chemicals and other gardening objects in awkward or ad-hoc places. Tools and chemicals are always best stored out of the way of passers-by and children.

1. If you are taking several tools into your garden, carry them in a wheelbarrow, bucket or a basket so there is a predetermined place to put them when they are not in use and at the end of the gardening session.
2. Before using long handled tools, look to make sure there is nobody behind or beside you so that you don't hit them with the tool.
3. When you have finished using a garden tool or you put a tool aside for a moment, place it out of the way of people.
4. Never lay a tool across a path or place it in long grass where it is hidden and where people could trip over it.
5. Lean a garden rake or long handled tool against something when you put it aside. If you have to lay it down, place it away from where people might walk. Place it with the pointed tangs or blade on the ground, not pointing up.
6. When putting a garden spade, shovel or fork aside, push it into the soil so that it remains upright and visible.
7. Carry tools such as spades, garden forks and rakes in your hand rather than over the shoulder. Carried on the shoulder, it is easy to hit someone accidentally if you turn around and they are close by.

Avoid sunburn and dehydration

During summer months, it is easy to lose track of time spent working in the garden and if you are not adequately protected, the risks of sunburn and or dehydration increase dramatically. Try planing ahead and perform your gardening work in the early hours of the morning before the sunlight and temperatures reach extremes.

1. Wear a hat to avoid sunburn.
2. If you sunburn easily, consider wearing a lightweight shirt with long sleeves as well as long trousers.
3. Use a sunscreen cream to avoid sunburn.
4. If in the garden for some time, remember to drink water to avoid dehydration.

Care with creatures

Gardens are a wonderful sight for humans and even more so for creatures both wild and native. Be aware that although it is your pride and joy, it may also become the new home to insects

and wildlife. For the most part, both humans and your new found residents can live in harmony, but there will be times where caution will be prudent and wise.

1. Do not try to pick up bugs, spiders and other creatures you come across. They might defend themselves by biting, stinging or scratching.
2. Look before lifting buckets, watering cans, boxes and other things. Redback spiders sometimes nest in them and a bite from these venomous creatures can be dangerous.
3. If gardening near bushland, do not interfere with any snakes or goannas you see in the garden.
4. Before putting on protective gear like boots and gloves, always check the insides of for unexpected insect guests.

If your garden adjoins bushland, be aware that reptiles — lizards and snakes — might venture into your garden. Never attempt to pick up reptiles (or any wild animal), nor attack them with a stick or a shovel. Wild animals defend themselves by biting and scratching, but are just as likely to seek a rapid escape from what they consider to be dangerous humans.

Lifting

When lifting something heavy, bend your knees and crouch down, then lift it by straightening your legs. To avoid back injury, do not bend over to pick up something that is heavy.

Seek help whenever lifting or moving heavy materials and or bulky objects. This will reduce your risk to back pain or strained muscles.

Storage

1. Designate an area of the garden for storing materials.
2. Store materials so that they are unlikely to fall over or spill.
3. Place heavier materials close to the ground and lighter materials on top of these.
4. Stack and store materials neatly so that they are easily accessible and out of the way of paths and places where people walk.
5. Avoid storing materials that the gardeners have no plans to use.

6. Ensure all pesticides are clearly labelled, secure from leakage and stored away from the easy reach of children.

Caring for children

1. If children are to visit or participate in the garden, avoid planting toxic plants and consider removing existing species (such as castor oil bush and oleander) that are toxic to children. Consider what might be a danger to children even if it is not dangerous to adults. It might be an idea to label hot-tasting plants such as chilli with visual and word warnings.

2. If growing water crops (such as water chestnut, arrowhead or watercress) in a container or pond, consider covering it with a barrier (weldmesh, for example) that prevents children falling in but lets the plants grow through.

3. Keep a watch on young children in case they wander off-site.

Construction

1. When planning to build structures, obtain advice on design and construction from a professional to ensure the structure is sturdy and safe.

2. Keep paths clear and level.

3. Make garden bed edges strong so that they will not collapse.

4. Avoid edging garden beds with sharp or pointed materials.

5. If digging a hole, make your work visible to those passing by so they do not trip in it. Mark the excavation with coloured tape or a barrier if you are leaving it for a while.

6. Garden edges should be made sturdy so that they do not dislodge when stood upon, posing a risk to gardeners. Well made edges generally deter weed invasion, especially when the paths they adjoin are well made.

Discouraging rodents

A well made open bay compost with removable front panel and hinged, mesh lid. The lid allows the entry of water and air necessary to the composting process. The bin is one of a connected series of three open bays that excluded rodents by denying them entry points, and was made of

timber.

Rodents — rats and mice — are a part of our urban environment and are seldom a direct danger to gardeners. They are a seldom seen presence in home gardens and parks. Controlling their presence, however, allays the fears of neighbours.

Rodents are attracted to the warmth of maturing compost. They have been known to breed in the warm conditions of open bay composts that are rarely turned.

To discourage them, adopt a strategy of habitat denial.

1. Make compost bays of sturdy construction with few access points for rodents.
2. Make open compost bays with removable front panels. The panels prevent rodents entering the bays and can be removed for turning and moving the compost.
3. Adopt the 'hot composting' method of open bay management rather than slow, unturned composting. Turn the compost weekly. As well as aerating the material and checking whether it is too dry and needing the addition of water or too wet and needing aeration, regular turning dislodges rodents that might have set up home in the bays. Frequent turning accelerates the composting process, producing usable material in a shorter time.
4. Use multiple plastic compost bins such as those marketed in hardware stores, nurseries and by councils. These are more rodent-proof than open compost bays. They can be made additionally proof against rodent infiltration by placing them on a piece of finer-grade wire mesh large enough to cover the base of the compost bin, with an edge that protrudes beyond the base.

Care with organic chemicals

1. The manufacture of organic controls for garden pest and plant disease management (sometimes called 'botanic' controls because they are derived from plants) should be done under the guidance of a gardener or adviser who has experience and is knowledgeable of the precautions to be taken in production, handling and application.
2. Some organic pesticides can cause injury. When making, handling and applying chilli-based insecticides such as chilli spray, wear gloves and keep hands away from your face (chilli in the eyes is painful).
3. Avoid getting botanic sprays and other controls in your eyes or in cuts on your hands or legs. It is best to wear gloves when applying any botanic or synthetic control.
4. Wash your hands after making, handling or applying organic pesticides, herbicides or other organic controls.

Other protective precautions

Wear gloves while removing pest bugs from plants to avoid being nipped or stung.

1. If you suffer breathing difficulties or asthma, consider wearing a dust mask when making or turning compost or spreading mulch.
2. Consider wearing gardening gloves to protect your hands and to avoid blisters from handling garden tools, and when doing garden construction, spreading compost and mulch and when removing pest insects from plants manually.
3. Wear enclosed shoes to protect your feet. Do not garden in sandals.
4. Cover standing water, such as in a pond, to reduce the incidence of mosquito breeding. Water plants such as azolla and duckweed reduce the surface area available to mosquitoes. Species of small native fish that eat mosquito wigglers can be introduced.