

Activity Risk Assessment - Scything

Bristol Parks and Green Spaces Volunteer Programme



Activity: Scything

Prepared by: Bristol Parks and Green Spaces

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If this risk assessment is relevant to your work session it must be identified on your site risk assessment. These hazards must be reassessed before an activity take place.

Hazard	Possible Outcome	Who is at risk?	Control measures	Risk rating	Person responsible
Untrained scythe users	Incorrect / unpractised use of scythe leading to accident and injury of user or others	Scythe user and public	Supervise max ratio of 8 scythe users or trainees per one trained leader. Helpers to support trained leader for groups larger than 5. Leader of scything session has received Scything training (at least ½ day basic) Leader to check everyone present when key instructions are given and to check understanding	Medium	Health and safety lead
Inadequate supervision by competent lead	Leader not noticing misuse of scythes leading to accident, injury or damage to kit and tools	Scythe users and public	Activity leader confident in demonstrating assembly, carrying, use and sharpening of scythes to others. Activity lead to demonstrate and monitor group activity as a priority to scything themselves.	Medium	Health and Safety lead
Leading larger groups (10 – 15 scythe users)	Harder for leader to monitor leading to incorrect use of scythe and potential injury	Scythe user and public	Group lead to recruit 1 trained helper / supervisor per 5 scythe users. Designate areas or smaller groups for each lead and support to keep a closer eye on	Medium	Health and safety lead
Sharp blade and swinging action of tool	Injury from being cut by the blade	Group leader; public, scythe	Scythe users to maintain 2 scythes (Snath) distance apart in all directions. Bystanders to be kept a safe distance from scythe users. Use a cordon if necessary. Instructor / group lead to keep clear of	Medium	health and safety lead

		users / vols	Scythe user's blades. All scythe users must keep looking up, be aware of distances and warn others if they notice space or other issues. No one to stand behind a scythe user.		
Cleaning blade	Injury to person cleaning scythe	Scythe user	Users wear gloves for this activity. Users are shown correct way to clean blade.	Medium	Health and safety lead
Sharpening the blade – every 10 to 15 minutes during the mowing session	Injury to person sharpening	Scythe sharpener	Person sharpening the blade wears leather rigger style gloves for this activity and must know and use correct and safest way to sharpen the blade with sharpening stone and water.	Medium	Health and safety lead
Peening the blade – at least annually before mowing season	Injury to person peening the blade	Scythe sharpener	Use peening jig which has been checked over and set up correctly on flat, stable ground. Person peening the blade must know and use correct method to set up and use the peening kit or not do this task. Person peening wears leather rigger style gloves. Use hammer with care.	Medium	Health and safety lead
Putting blade on/taking blade off snath	Injury to person putting blade on / taking it off	Scythe user	Users wear leather rigger style gloves for this activity. Users are shown correct way to put the blade on and take the blade off leather rigger style the snath.	Medium	Health and safety lead
Cutting with the scythe – uneven ground; hidden features or objects	Uneven ground leading to snags, slips and falls. Protruding objects leading to blade damage and jarring injury to scythe user.	Scythe user	Scythe users walk over the area to be scythed before starting work. Identify protruding objects (e.g. rocks or anthills etc) Inform other scythe users of features and obstacles to be aware of.	Low	Health and safety lead
Cutting with the scythe – plants with poisonous sap	Contact with poisonous plants and sap – for example, hogweed. Leading to blisters from contact with the skin	Scythe users / Volunteer s working nearby	Volunteers to wear trousers and long-sleeved tops if working in an area where potentially hazardous plants are present	Low	Health and safety lead
Cutting with scythe	User losing control of scythe and slipping out of hands (especially in wet weather). Tool making contact with	Other people / dogs off leads in vicinity	Users do not wear gloves and work far away from others. Keep members of the public/people away from the work area. Keep an eye out for dogs not on leads. Do not scythe in wet weather when the handles	Low	Health and safety lead

	others leading to user or other injury.		(snaths) become wet and slippery. Ask group to warn each other of dogs / people approaching near.		
Carrying scythe	User slipping, tripping or losing control of scythe leading to injury	Scythe user/ people in vicinity	Users are shown the correct way to carry the scythe. Users are also asked to put the blade guard on where-ever possible. A check of the area being scythed is carried out prior to the course and any slip or trip hazards marked.	Medium	Health and safety lead
Storing scythes	Incorrect storage of scythe leading to injury through it falling and contact with person	Members of the public	Users are shown the correct way to store the scythe so that it won't fall on anyone. Users are also asked to put the blade guard on where-ever possible. Scythes are either stored where members of the public don't have access to them, or it is made obvious that they shouldn't touch them – i.e. with 'do not cross' tape.	Medium	Health and safety lead
Damaged / unsafe scythe	Damaged scythe not reported leading to accident or injury. Damaged tool not fixed or replaced due to lack of staff resource or budget to fix or replace.	Scythe user / scythe owner / public and vols	Session leader / tool lender to check tool condition before use, during and at end of session. Signing out sheet for borrowing scythes if borrowed from BCC. Report damage to tool store manager using tool lend form if borrowed from BCC parks	Medium	Health and Safety lead, Tool store manager