



Poisonous Plants & Natural Hazards Policy

Policy Code: FS-HS-007

Version: 1.0

Effective Date: 23.03.2026

Review Date: Annually, following incidents, following site changes

Statement

At Nurture & Grow Forest & Play, we recognise that natural environments contain plants and vegetation that may be harmful if touched, ingested or misused.

We are committed to ensuring children can explore the natural environment safely through a **risk-benefit approach**, supported by effective supervision, clear boundaries and staff knowledge.

1. Aims

We aim to:

- Protect children, staff and visitors from harm
- Promote safe exploration of the natural environment
- Ensure staff are confident in identifying common hazardous plants
- Embed plant safety into daily Forest School practice

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Forest School Leader

- Ensures site is checked for hazardous plants
- Maintains knowledge of local plant risks
- Updates risk assessments as required

Staff

- Carry out **dynamic risk assessments**
- Supervise children closely
- Reinforce safety rules (no picking/eating plants)
- Report hazards immediately



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3. Risk Assessment and Site Management

- Site risk assessments identify hazardous plants
- Daily visual checks are carried out before sessions
- Seasonal changes are considered (growth, berries, fungi)
- Hazardous plants are:
 - Removed where possible
 - Clearly identified and avoided

4. Dynamic Risk Assessment

Staff continuously monitor:

- New plant growth
- Fallen berries, seeds or leaves
- Children's interactions with natural materials

Immediate action will be taken where risk is identified.

5. Rules for Children

Children are supported to understand:

- No picking or eating plants unless supervised
- Hands away from mouth during outdoor play
- Always ask an adult before touching unfamiliar plants

These rules are reinforced regularly.

6. Supervision

- Children are supervised at all times
- Staff position themselves to observe interactions
- Higher-risk areas are closely monitored



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7. First Aid Response

In the event of suspected poisoning or reaction:

If swallowed:

- Do not induce vomiting
- Rinse mouth
- Seek medical advice (111 or 999)

If on skin:

- Wash with soap and water

If in eyes:

- Rinse with clean water for at least 10–15 minutes

Emergency procedures will be followed where necessary.

8. Staff Knowledge and Training

- Staff are trained in plant awareness
- Reference materials (such as plant guides) are available
- Staff are not expected to identify all plants but must:
 - Recognise risk
 - Act appropriately

9. Environmental Responsibility

Children are taught to:

- Respect nature
- Avoid damaging plants unnecessarily
- Understand that some plants can be harmful

A detailed plant identification guidance is provided in the “Poisonous Plants Reference Guide” (Appendix 1).