



B.E.S.T in Horticulture Group.

B.E.S.T in Horticulture Education Limited

Hazardous Plants Policy

Valid from 1st January 2026 to 31st December 2028

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Appendices

1. Spread sheet - Listing of hazardous plants

2. Generic Risk Assessment

Note: Copies of *Appendices No's 1, 2* and can be obtained from the nominated Director

1.0 INTRODUCTION

There has been an increased awareness of the subject of potentially hazardous plants partly due to the media exposure of gardening programmes and magazines. Leading horticultural organisations have also paid a significant part in bringing the subject to the fore.

Fortunately, incidents of serious injury or poisoning by plants are rare in the United Kingdom, and deaths fortunately very infrequent. Deaths generally only occur because of mistaking a poisonous plant for an edible one or misjudging the correct dose of a “herbal remedy”. In very rare circumstances deaths have occurred because of a severe allergic reaction.

It is important that the possible risks are understood, it is also important that the whole subject is seen in proper perspective, to avoid unnecessary alarm and spoiling the opportunity and enjoyment of working with a diverse range of plants.

It is reasonable to expect individuals to exercise responsibility for their own safety, but at the same time the college has a duty to prevent exposure to high risk species and to advise of any known potential risks which may be encountered when carrying out routine horticultural operations.

Many plants or indeed parts of plants are safe to eat, in fact many are recognised as food plants and most ornamental plants, or weeds are in fact innocuous. Only a small number of plants can cause severe injury or poisoning with a moderate number being potentially hazardous.

2.0 HAZARDOUS PLANTS POLICY STATEMENT

B.E.S.T in Horticulture Group, B.E.S.T in Horticulture Education (hereafter referred to as the Company) is committed to ensuring the health safety and welfare of its Learners, Lecturing Staff and Others when handling any plants or plant material that may be considered hazardous.

The updating process will take account of advice received from authoritative sources and research undertaken by horticultural lead bodies to ensure that there is;

an awareness of potential hazardous; and

plant handling takes place in a safe manner.

This document currently uses and acts upon the following information sources:

- The Code of Recommended Retail Practice Relating to the Labelling and Display of Potentially Harmful Plants as published by The Horticultural Trades Association
- The Royal Horticultural Societies publication, Conservation and Environment Guidelines, Potentially Harmful Garden Plants
- Current examples of good practice within the Horticultural Industry
- Information received from Health and Safety Executive
- Recommendations from investigative bodies regarding incidents that have taken place involving accidents to individuals whilst carrying out operations specifically involving plants of a hazardous nature

The following guidance notes are based on the model developed by the Horticultural Trades Association and **must be strictly adhered to.**

2.1 Responsibilities

1. All Learners are provided with a copy of this document at induction.
2. All staff are provided with a copy of this document.
3. All operations that involve handling potentially_hazardous plants must observe the guidelines as laid out in this document and in the generic risk assessment notes held in the Generic Risk Assessment File which will be found located at all sites where the company operates. A hard copy can be obtained from the nominated Director.
4. Where a Specific Risk Assessment is deemed essential this must be carried out prior to any work being carried out or contact with any plants.
5. The Company will always take reasonable care of its Learners and Lecturers involved in all practical activities ensuring compliance with legislation and Codes of Practice.

2.2 For Activities Involving Hazardous Plants

It is the responsibility of the member of staff organising an activity to ensure that:

1. They have examined the appropriate Generic Risk Assessment.
2. The Generic Risk Assessment number is recorded on their Teaching Plan Outline against the practical activity, which is due to take place on that occasion

3. A Specific Risk Assessment (which may be dynamic and not recording in writing) is completed prior to any activity in which potentially hazardous plants that may pose a significant risk are handled or where the Generic Risk Assessment requires one to be completed as a further control measure.
4. That the guidance notes in this booklet are followed at all times.

2.3 Meanings

For the purposes of this document, the term 'Potentially Hazardous Plants' includes:

Any plant, which may cause an injury/illness as a result of human contact with any of the following:

- **Spines**
- **Thorns**
- **Bark**
- **Foliage**
- **Fruit/berries**
- **Sap**
- **Roots**

For the purpose of this document the term 'Significant Risk' means:

Wherever there is a possibility of a serious reportable injury/illness being sustained as a result of coming into contact with or ingesting any part of a specified plant.

2.4 Categorisation (A full listing will be found in the appendices)

CATEGORY A

The handling of these plants should be **restricted and sales to the public discouraged**. Display in ornamental areas **should be supervised** so that children do not have access. **Individual plants should be labelled, and learners should be informed of the potentially harmful nature of the plant by lecturers**. The required text is indicated below.

CATEGORY B

These plants require a **warning on the plant label** and on any **bed label** or **point of sale material**. The required warning text required is indicated below.

CATEGORY C

These plants require a **warning on the plant label**. The required warning text is indicated below.

Warning Text to be used as appropriate (Refer to tables 1, 2 and 3 in the appendices)

Caution – This plant has the potential to be toxic if eaten

Caution – This plant has the potential to be an eye irritant

Caution – This plant has the potential to be a skin irritant

2.5 Application

These guidelines apply to every operation/activity for Learners and Lecturers involving plant material deemed to be hazardous.

2.6 Other Health Issues that should be given consideration during plant handling operations

Learners, Lecturers, and others should be aware of the existence, in the outdoor environment, of naturally occurring infections, such as ***Tetanus***, ***Leptospirosis (Weils Disease)*** and ***Lyme Disease*** and take precautions against these.

Learners, Lecturers and others should take such action as cleaning and covering abrasions, cuts and scratches occurring before or during plant / growing media handling activities and ensure that hands are clean before eating. Learners should be told that if they feel unwell some days or weeks after specified activities, particularly where flu-like symptoms are involved, they should consult their doctor and tell him/her where and what they have been doing.

Compliance is implicit under the Company's Health and Safety Policy and therefore all guidance contained there within applies to this policy.