

Landscape gardener

Straightforward information and practical
tips to help you sort health and safety



Safe Start Up 

Landscape gardener

This guide will help you with health and safety. It gives you straightforward information and practical tips. It tells you what you need to do to make sure you don't break the law, and how to protect yourself, anyone who works for you, your customers and your reputation. It also shows you where to go to get more information if you need it.

No-one is saying that landscape gardening or garden maintenance is a risky business. But at the end of the day, if things go wrong it's your livelihood or business that will suffer. You'll find that you already do – or

plan to do – a lot of what's covered, and much of it is common sense. Looking after health and safety is just part of managing a business well. Done properly, you could see it save money too.

Who are we?

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health is the Chartered body for health and safety professionals. We were founded in 1945 and are a registered charity. Find out more at www.iosh.co.uk.

Here to help

If you have a question, or want information on an issue you're facing, get in touch with IOSH on +44 (0)116 257 3199 or techinfo@iosh.co.uk. Our helpline is completely free.

You'll find this guide helpful if you:

- own or manage a small landscape gardening business
- work as a landscape gardener or maintain gardens for a living.

Did you know...

In a single year, more than 50 self-employed people died from workplace injuries



By law you must...

In the UK, the law applies to all businesses, large or small. If you're self-employed or an employer then **you** are responsible for the health and safety of your business. The law is there to make sure you have a safe working environment and cut down the risk of you, your staff (if you have any), contractors, customers or members of the public getting ill or injured. So, by law you must...

...get some help with your health and safety duties

As an employer you have to appoint someone who knows about health and safety. This could be:

- yourself, if you have a health and safety qualification, knowledge and experience
- one or more of your staff, if they are qualified or you get them trained
- someone from outside the business.

If you're not confident about managing health and safety in-house then you may need to call in some external help or advice.

Even if you don't employ any staff, don't forget that legally you have what's called a 'duty of care' to anyone who is affected by what you do for a living – from a contractor to a member of the public.

Did you know...

Good health and safety saves cash: you can save £12 for every £1 you spend



Find out more

- Find out more at www.hse.gov.uk/business/competent-advice.htm
- Download the HSE leaflet 'Getting specialist help with health and safety' at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg420.pdf
- Get guidance on getting professional advice at www.iosh.co.uk/information_and_resources/need_professional_advice.aspx
- Find out about our free enquiry service at www.iosh.co.uk/information_and_resources/information_help_line.aspx
- Download our free guide on getting help with health and safety at www.iosh.co.uk/techguide

By law you must...

...write a health and safety policy for your business

If you employ five or more people, part or full time, you have to have a written policy.

The policy should describe how you'll manage health and safety. It lets your staff and others know that you have a serious commitment to keeping on top of risks as part of your business. It should clearly state who does what, when and how.

Your policy doesn't have to take you long to write, or be lengthy or complicated. Download the template listed in 'Find out more' and complete it, or use it as a guide to write your own.

Your policy shouldn't just be a piece of lifeless paperwork – it's designed to help you manage health and safety properly. It will only be effective if you and your staff are aware of it and follow what it says. You'll need to review it every now and then to reflect any changes – just make a note in your calendar, say once a year. You'll also need to see if it needs updating if there's been a major change, for example, to the way you work, or where you work.



- Download a policy template at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/risk-assessment-and-policy-template.doc
- Look at an example of a policy at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/health-and-safety-policy-example.doc

Did you know...

One person is seriously injured at work every 17 minutes

...manage the risk in your business

You must consider and manage any risks where you work or connected with what you do.

This is a straightforward process. Known as 'risk assessment', it involves thinking about what you do in your business that could harm people – you, your staff (if you have them), contractors or your customers or members of the public – and what you're going to do to try to stop it happening.

In your line of work, you will probably look at things like:

- powered tools and equipment
- lifting and carrying heavy tools or materials
- handling chemicals
- sun exposure.

There may be more, but these are the main areas you're most likely to need to focus on – we look at these four in a bit more detail on page 09.

Risk assessments aren't about piles of paperwork, just sensible actions to control the risks. The law doesn't expect you to remove all risks, but it does expect you to control them. You're probably doing most of this already as part of day-to-day management – but your risk assessment will help you see if what you're doing is enough or if you need to do more.



Find out more

- Look at templates and examples at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/risk-assessment-and-policy-template.doc
- Look at risk assessment case studies at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies
- Use our free risk assessment tool at www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk

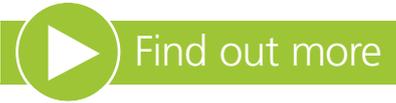
By law you must...

...talk to your employees

If you employ anyone, you need to consult them on health and safety. Again, it's not complicated – you can do this by listening and talking to them about:

- health and safety and the work they do
- how risks are controlled
- the best ways of giving information and training.

This is a two-way thing. Let your staff raise concerns and give their opinions on decisions. After all, they're often the best people to understand the risks involved in their work – and talking to them about it lets them know that you take their health and safety seriously.



- Find out more at www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/doyourbit

...give training and information

If you have staff, they need to know how to work safely and without risking their health. You must give clear instructions, information and training. Don't forget to include temporary workers.

Training could include, for example, lifting and carrying safely and using chemicals in the right way. Not all training needs to be formal or expensive – for example, you could give some basic training in informal sessions yourself, based on your knowledge and experience. Remember that health and safety training must be

in working hours and you can't charge employees for it. Keeping training records will help remind you when refreshers are due.

Make sure that everyone has information on:

- hazards and risks they may face – for your business, bad backs are a typical risk, for example – have a look at page 10 for more details
- what's in place to deal with hazards and risks
- what to do in an emergency.



- Download a guide on health and safety training at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg345.pdf



By law you must...

...have the right facilities

If you employ people, you need to think about facilities. Some of these legal requirements will sound obvious, but it's a good idea to check to make sure that you've covered the welfare basics.

You need to provide:

- toilet and washing facilities
- drinking water
- somewhere to store clothing and to change if your staff need to wear protective clothing for the job they do – remember you need to supply the protective clothing
- somewhere to rest and eat meals.

In your job, you'll be very mobile, working on sites or at your client's properties, so you probably won't have easy access to facilities.

Make sure you allow enough time for you or your staff to have breaks when out and about. You and your team may need to take a rest break in the car or van. To be hygienic, it's a good idea to have some basic washing facilities handy, for example hand gels that don't need water or a container of clean water.

You also need to make sure that where you store equipment and chemicals there is:

- good ventilation – with fresh, clean air
- a comfortable working temperature
- lighting suitable for the work being carried out
- enough space to work in
- a clean environment with bins provided for rubbish.

You need to keep your workplace safe by maintaining and servicing your work equipment – we look at this in more detail on page 09.

As your work is mainly outside, you need to give staff weather-protective clothing such as waterproof coats and trousers. You may need to provide hats to protect from sun exposure.

Did you know...

One small company was fined £3,500 in court because it didn't have adequate washing facilities for employees who were at risk of getting dermatitis



Find out more

- Download a guide on workplace health, safety and welfare at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg244.pdf
- Find out more about the risks of poor facilities at www.hse.gov.uk/fee-for-intervention/basic-safety-mistakes/facilities.htm



By law you must...

...plan for first aid, accidents and ill health

You have to organise first aid arrangements where you work. If you employ people, you're responsible for making sure they get attention straightaway if they get ill or injured.

If you're self-employed, with no staff, you need to have a first aid kit.

If you have staff, you must have:

- a stocked first aid box
- an 'appointed person' to take charge – someone who co-ordinates first aid where you work, restocks the box when necessary

and calls an ambulance if needed. This person doesn't have to be a trained first aider

- information for employees giving details of what you've organised for first aid.

You may decide that you need someone trained in first aid. Your first aid assessment will highlight this – you just need to consider your situation and write down anything significant, along with what you plan to do to deal with it. For example, think about how far away from your nearest surgery or

hospital you could be, and whether any of your staff have complex medical conditions.

By law, you must report and keep a record of certain accidents, incidents and illness.

Did you know...

Four people are killed every week at work



Find out more

- Get information on first aid at www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid and a leaflet on first aid from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.pdf
- Find out what needs reporting and how at www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm
- Buy an accident book from the HSE at books.hse.gov.uk or record the details in your own system

...display the health and safety law poster

If you employ anyone, you must either display this poster, or give each member of staff the pocket card version. The poster outlines UK health and safety law and includes a simple list that tells employers what they and

their employees need to do. There is also space on it for you to name your health and safety representatives, if you have any, and health and safety contacts, for example, your local environmental health office.



Find out more

- You can get copies of the poster and pocket cards from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/lawposter.htm

By law you must...

...get insurance for your business

If you have employees you'll probably need employers' liability insurance. It protects you against any costs of compensation in claims made against you by an employee if they get injured or ill and it's caused by your business.

There may be other types of cover you need, such as public liability, business use for vehicles or specific insurance to cover accidental damage your work could cause, for example by falling branches when you're pruning.



Find out more

- Download information on employers' liability insurance at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse40.pdf
- Find out more on insurance at www.abi.org.uk/Information/Business/15310.pdf and www.abi.org.uk/Information/Business/40507.pdf

...keep your business up to date

Keeping up with news and developments in your sector will help you keep your health and safety policy and risk assessments up to date. You'll find help through trade unions, employers' organisations, Business Link and trade associations.



Find out more

- Read IOSH news and sign up to RSS news feeds at www.iosh.co.uk/news
- Subscribe to free ebulletins at www.hse.gov.uk/news/subscribe
- Get podcasts from www.hse.gov.uk/podcasts
- Get SMS text alerts to your mobile from www.hse.gov.uk/sms

Issues to think about

We've covered some of the basic things you need to do to comply with the law. Here, we look at some specific issues and legal duties relevant to your work.

Powered tools and equipment

Gardening and landscaping equipment with powered mechanisms and blades can be dangerous. You must use equipment in the right way. Equipment supplied in the UK will have a CE certification to show it complies with various European standards. You, and any staff or contractors, will need to be aware of the supplier's operating instructions. Make sure that your equipment has the appropriate guards and safety features and wear the personal protective equipment (PPE) suggested by the supplier. Don't be tempted to modify or override any safety features, for example, lawn mower controls – they're there for a good reason.

If you use petrol or diesel-powered equipment, think about how and where you store both the kit and the fuel, and how to ventilate fumes.

You'll need to make sure that your electrical equipment isn't designed solely for domestic use. Make sure you check and maintain electrical equipment, especially as it's likely to be moved around a lot and used outside. You may want to consider hiring equipment from a reputable supplier as it's their responsibility to make sure the equipment is maintained and tested, and that's one less headache for you.

Think about the noise generated by powered equipment. Most lawnmowers and strimmers now come with an indication of the decibels they generate – if it's higher than 80 dBA then you'll need to use hearing protection. Remember that damage – from tinnitus to hearing loss – can happen gradually over a period of exposure, so it's best to prevent it before it starts.

Of course it's not just noise that can cause a problem with powered equipment – you or your team can develop permanent disabling injuries from vibrations using power tools like strimmers and trimmers day in, day out. Conditions like vibration white finger, where sufferers' hands become numb, struggle to grip and are more sensitive to temperature changes, can be painful and disabling. Always check what the manufacturer or supplier recommends.

Did you know...

Around 20,000 people every year are diagnosed with hearing loss because of their work



Find out more

- Download a guide on reducing the risks associated with work equipment and tools at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg229.pdf
- Find out more about the risks of working with unguarded tools at www.hse.gov.uk/fee-for-intervention/basic-safety-mistakes/guards.htm
- Look at FAQs on working with electricity at www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq.htm
- Look for more information on protecting your hearing at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg363.pdf
- Find out more about the risks of vibrating power tools at www.hse.gov.uk/fee-for-intervention/basic-safety-mistakes/tools.htm
- Get more on controlling risks from vibration at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg175.pdf

Issues to think about

Lifting and carrying

If you move heavy and bulky items wrongly you can end up with a serious injury, mainly to your back. You're most likely to injure yourself if you use too much force to lift, lower, push, pull or carry an object, and if the item is heavier than you can manage. Working in an awkward position when trying to lift or carry things can also cause problems. And if you or someone who works for you has an existing or earlier injury, that can lead to more painful health conditions, including lower back pain, joint injuries and repetitive strain injuries such as bursitis or tendinitis.

Remember that if you're working on your own or as part of a small team it's tough to keep on top of all the work if you or a key team member can't pull their weight because of a bad back. Try to:

- bend your knees and not your back
- use some sort of ramp or more than one person to lift heavy equipment out of a trailer or van
- move heavy materials with a trolley or wheelbarrow or split the load up
- wear gloves if what you're moving is difficult to grip
- clear your route before you move something heavy, and make sure there is actually somewhere to put your load down
- watch out for wet or muddy pathways that mean you slip while lifting or moving equipment or materials
- avoid twisting while carrying or lifting something heavy
- if you're the boss, make sure your staff have the right training.

Did you know...

Musculoskeletal disorders – from back pain to sore wrists – affect one million people every year



Find out more

- Use a guide to help you cut the risks involved with moving heavy or bulky objects by hand – download it at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg398.pdf
- Find out more about the damage you could do if you don't lift and move things safely at www.hse.gov.uk/msd/index.htm



Issues to think about

Handling chemicals

A lot of the weedkillers and pesticides you use can be harmful but they can be used safely as long as you follow the instructions from the manufacturer or supplier. It's important to use the personal protective equipment they recommend (eg gloves or a mask) and to follow basic hygiene rules, washing or rinsing your hands after using chemicals, and especially before eating and even before going to the toilet.

Some chemicals can burn the skin or have more long-lasting effects – certain chemicals and oils can cause cancer – so it's very important to read the information that comes with the products you're using. If you do end up washing your hands frequently you might need to use a moisturiser to help prevent dermatitis.

You need to make a list of any substances used at work – not just the products you'd use in the gardens, but even cleaning products like bleach or oils too. You also need to know what can happen if products are spilled, accidentally mixed or splashed onto skin or into the eyes. This is easier than it sounds – most products will have a 'safety data sheet' that lists storage,

disposal and first aid requirements, and they're free from the manufacturer (if you don't have any, just ask for them). You might need a simple 'spill kit' of sand and a dustpan and brush.

You'll need to do a basic risk assessment of key activities such as storing, mixing and disposing of chemicals – think about what chemicals you're using, who could be harmed if things go wrong and what precautions you should take to stop people getting hurt.

Take care when you handle powders. Try not to create a lot of dust that you might breathe in, and always handle chemicals in a well ventilated area. Store your chemicals properly in correctly labelled containers – white powders without labels can look very similar. If you can't read the label or it gets damaged you could accidentally mix chemicals that react together and become more harmful, for example, giving off toxic gases.

Find out about disposing of your waste chemicals – you may not be allowed to pour them down surface water or wastewater drains under environmental legislation. Depending on the quantities of chemicals you're carrying in your van or truck, you may even need a transport licence from the Environment Agency.

It's worth looking to see what's new on the market – there are products which can help cut down your exposure (eg ready-made solutions rather than powders). If you have staff, you need to train them and make sure they follow safety guidelines and take the precautions you tell them about.

Did you know...

There are 40,000 new cases of occupational dermatitis, the painful skin condition, diagnosed every year



Find out more

- Find out about working with hazardous substances at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg136.pdf



Issues to think about

Sun exposure

People who work outside for a living without protecting themselves from the effects of the sun are more likely to get skin cancer. Most cases are very treatable – but it is also easily preventable.

You and any people who work for you need to keep areas of skin covered to protect it from the harmful effects of the sun – wear loose clothing that allows ventilation but make sure it

doesn't get caught in the equipment you use. It makes sense to wear a cap or hat to protect your head and face.

You can also use sun block – but read the instructions and make sure you apply it properly and frequently. Wearing heavy duty sun block is more and more common for people spending long periods outside – think of top level sports like cricket. Drink plenty of fluids in hot weather.

Did you know...

Five thousand cancer cases a year are caused by exposure to the sun for those who work mostly outside



Find out more

- Find out more about the risks of sun exposure and how to deal with it at www.hse.gov.uk/skin/sunprotect.htm



Issues to think about

You also need to consider...

- **Slips, trips and falls** – keep where you're working tidy to cut down the risk of a damaging accident.
- **Falls from height** – when you have to use a ladder to prune or lop branches, make sure it's secure – if you can't ask someone to foot it, you could tie it in place before you start work. Make sure you can work without stretching – it's a common cause of accidents.
- **Bad weather** – weather conditions can cause problems to many outside trades. If you or your team can't avoid working in bad weather, try to cut down the time spent in poor conditions, for example, working under shelter. You should also take regular breaks, and wear suitable clothing. Remember that some equipment will have limitations in certain weather conditions – check what the manufacturer says.
- **Driving** – don't forget to think about driving for work as part of your safety planning. The effect of an accident on a small business or self-employed individual – from a collision to materials falling off a moving vehicle – is likely to be greater than on a larger business with better resources. Plan each journey, allow plenty of time and make sure your equipment and anything else you load up is secure before you set off.
- **Contractors** – you may work with or take on contractors. Make sure they have the right skills and knowledge to do their job safely, and that they understand what performance you expect. Explain your site health and safety rules to them (for example, what to do in an emergency, looking after tools properly), and if you have a policy, make sure they understand and

follow it. Don't forget that you can be held legally responsible for what your contractors do or don't do.

- **Working on your own** – always take your mobile phone with you, and try to let a friend or relative know where you're planning to go each day.

Did you know...

Injuries caused by slips or trips cost employers more than £500 million a year

Did you know...

A third of all fall-from-height accidents involve ladders or stepladders – 14 people are killed and 1,200 suffer major injuries a year



Find out more

- Download a guide on preventing slips and trips at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg225.pdf
- Find more guidance on using ladders safely at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg402.pdf
- Get advice on working outside at www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/outdoor.htm
- Find out more about safe driving at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg382.pdf
- Get more information about working with contractors at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg368.pdf
- Find out more about the risks of working on your own at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf
- Download our 'Going it alone' guide for a quick overview of things to think about when working on your own at www.iosh.co.uk/safestartup

This IOSH guide is designed as an introduction to health and safety basics for low risk businesses, and is not intended to give exhaustive coverage of the subject. We encourage all employers and business owners to find out more about the detailed legal requirements affecting your business at www.hse.gov.uk.

