

Health and Safety Information for Volunteers Working in Trelissick Park

Wellington City Council (WCC), our Group and volunteers are all responsible for your health and safety while working in the park. We will do our best to make sure the area worked in is safe and suitable for the abilities of the party. The following will help you to be aware of reasonably foreseeable risks both to yourself and others and what you can do.

Note that we are not allowed to use chainsaws, weed-eaters and chemicals for weeds in the park, unless you have gone through a certification process. There are no toilet facilities in the park. No volunteer is allowed to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

If you come across any hazardous situations, or volunteers working unsafely, please let the Trelissick Park Group representative know so we can do something about it.

Before Starting

After a prior site assessment by the Group representative, participants will be contacted by email, explaining the context, tasks, directions to the worksite and any precautions. Before the work starts there will be an on-site briefing.

Slips, Trips and Falls

Much of our ground is steep, rough and loose underfoot. Rocks, tree roots or logs might be hidden under grass. Stream banks might be unstable and hidden under vegetation. Branches or tree trunks used for support might be rotten. Some tracks can become slippery after rain. Other tracks are uneven, narrow and above steep drops. Vines, tree roots and flax/toetoe fronds over tracks are trip hazards. Rocks next to or in the stream may be slippery. All these hazards can cause injuries to all parts of the body, ranging from 'minor' to 'serious'.

Think ahead all the time. Wear stout footwear with good grip and laces firmly done up. Keep at least 2 metres 'visibility space' behind the person in front when walking along tracks. Greater caution is needed going down-hill. Avoid, or get help if carrying heavy or awkward-sized objects on uneven ground. Keep grubbers and spades elevated while walking. On steep loose slopes, avoid working directly below someone else. Get into the water for work on the stream bank. Use a stick or mutual support from another person if crossing a stream on slippery rocks - but do not cross at all if the water is fast-flowing. If you are unsure about your safety in any situation, don't go there! Please let us know beforehand if you have any pre-existing back, knee or ankle conditions, so that we can make allowances.

Weather

We will defer the work to another day if the weather looks to be bad. However, most locations in the park are sheltered and we usually proceed if the forecast is for occasional light showery conditions.

Dehydration and sunburn are the main problems with hot weather and in cold weather: hypothermia. The resulting fatigue risks accidents.

In sunny weather, wear a hat, long-sleeved shirt and long trousers. Use sunscreen when necessary. Work in shade, if possible.

Keep warm, well fed and dry in cold/windy/wet conditions. Wear a parka if necessary. Layered clothing will help you adjust to the heat of activity to avoid sweating. Major heat loss is from the head, so wear a warm hat. Avoid working from the stream for long periods.

Drink plenty of water in hot weather and hot drinks when cold. Take regular breaks and rotate tasks.

Manual Handling

Risks: Injuries to muscles, tendons and soft tissues, most commonly in the back, neck, shoulders and wrists. These can come from a single over-exertion or sustained over-use. Cuts from sharp rubbish.

Don't overload bags of weeds, rubbish and mulch. Aim for about 15-20 kg - less for smaller people and children. Use correct lifting techniques – bend at knees and keep your back straight. Take care when handling rubbish, due to possible sharp objects. For uprooting, use leverage. Get help, if necessary. Rotate tasks. Keep an eye out for others having difficulty.

Weeding and Planting

Risks: Spikes and scratches to face and eyes. Foreign particles in eyes. Stinging and allergy-inducing plants. Lacerations, cuts or impact injuries from swinging or cutting tools. Blisters. Wrist, back and shoulder strains.

Wear sturdy gloves and boots. Use eye protection if working within spiky plants or thick scrub. Take care with rotten branches, thorny or poisonous plants (eg stinging nettle). Young erect flax fronds are sharp! Toetoe fronds can cause an allergic reaction to the skin of bare arms. Never climb trees. Work at least 2 metres from your neighbour when using a grubber. Use a sickle or machete only when a lopper, secateurs or hand-saw are not practicable. These should be used by experienced operators, well away from others and only on soft vegetation. They should be sheathed and safely stored when not in use. Make sure tools are sharp, there are no splits in the handles or loose tool-heads. Kneeling mats when working on small patches are an excellent way to avoid back strain.

Take regular breaks. Rotate tasks. Help anyone who is getting tired.

Leave the site and track clear of any hazards.

Animals and Cyclists

Dogs are allowed off-leash in the park. Ignore an aggressive dog if possible. Ask the owner to put it on a leash. Cyclists are not allowed in the park, but some choose to ignore the signs. Avoid confrontations.

Insects

Leave the area if you disturb a wasps' or bees' nest. Inform the Group representative, so that eradication can be arranged. Sand-flies can be a problem in summer, so use long trousers, long-sleeved shirt and thick socks or repellent.

Soil and Mulch

Risks: Soil-borne diseases such as tetanus or legionellosis, infection of existing wounds, gastric and respiratory complaints (eg asthma), foreign particles in eyes, skin irritations.

Wear appropriate clothing, footwear and gloves. Use eye protection if necessary. Avoid skin contact with wet soil and muddy water. Avoid activities that produce dust. Cover any cuts or scratches. Ensure you wash your hands thoroughly before eating.

Working Alone

All the above risks apply to anyone working alone, but with the added difficulty of obtaining emergency assistance. Accordingly, a mobile phone and first aid kit are essential. Much greater caution is required, with exclusion of tasks considered too difficult or dangerous. Check the weather forecast and postpone the work if necessary.

Be aware if working across the stream that it can rise very quickly from rainfall – retreat as soon as it starts rising. If the water is polluted keep out of it, find the source if practicable and contact the Greater Wellington Regional Council pollution hotline on 0800 496 734.

Pre-existing Medical Conditions, Accidents and Emergencies

Please tell us if you have any pre-existing medical conditions which may affect your abilities, so that we can make allowances. Anyone with allergies should carry medication. The Group representative will carry a mobile phone and first aid kit.

Any accident must be reported to the Group representative, for passing this on to WCC.

In the event of an emergency (eg natural disaster, serious accident/incident), please ensure your own safety and follow the instructions of the Group representative. Emergency evacuation will aim to always use the inwards route.

Much of the above has been sourced, with thanks, from the *In Safe Hands Toolkit for Community Groups in Practical Conservation 2nd Edition* by Conservation Volunteers New Zealand and from the Memorandum of Understanding between WCC and the Group, dated 28 October 2009.