

Working Safely in Shrub, Lawn, and Garden Services Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Working in shrub, lawn, and garden services might seem like a routine outdoor job, but it comes with real risks that can affect your safety and the success of your workday. From handling sharp tools to working around busy equipment and unpredictable terrain, there are many chances for injuries like cuts, strains, or slips. Weather conditions like heat or rain can add to the dangers, making it harder to stay focused and safe. Taking shortcuts or ignoring safety rules not only puts you at risk but can also delay the job and lead to costly mistakes. Staying alert and using safe work practices helps you protect yourself and finish the day without injuries.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Garden and landscaping jobs might look low-risk, but the hazards are real—and often underestimated. When you're trimming shrubs, mowing lawns, or digging in garden beds, you're exposed to sharp tools, heavy equipment, and uneven ground. A simple mistake, like stepping into a hole or using a dull blade, can lead to twisted ankles, deep cuts, or even serious back injuries.

Here are just a few of the common dangers:

- **Injury from Tools and Equipment**

Lawn mowers, trimmers, chainsaws, and hedge clippers can cause serious cuts or even amputations if mishandled or used without proper guards and PPE. Flying debris can also lead to eye injuries.

- **Chemical Exposure**

Fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides are often used in this

line of work. Without gloves, goggles, or proper ventilation, you can suffer from skin irritation, breathing problems, or chemical burns.

▪ **Heat Stress and Dehydration**

Long hours in the sun, especially during peak summer months, can lead to heat exhaustion, heatstroke, and dehydration—especially when combined with physical exertion.

▪ **Insect Bites and Animal Hazards**

Bees, wasps, ticks, and mosquitoes can bite or sting, causing allergic reactions or diseases like Lyme. Workers might also encounter snakes, rodents, or aggressive dogs on private properties, all of which pose unique risks if startled or provoked.

▪ **Slips, Trips, and Falls**

Wet grass, uneven terrain, exposed roots, or garden hoses left lying around can all lead to falls, sprains, or worse.

Even a “routine” day in the garden can go south quickly. Staying aware and prepared makes all the difference.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Working in shrub, lawn, and garden services might seem relaxing or low-risk—but in reality, it’s full of hidden hazards. Landscapers and groundskeepers face a wide range of physical, chemical, and environmental risks, especially when working long hours outdoors or handling heavy equipment. Whether you’re trimming trees, spreading mulch, mowing, or planting, the dangers can creep up quickly if you’re not careful.

Equipment-Related Injuries

Power tools like hedge trimmers, mowers, and weed eaters can cause serious cuts, amputations, or eye injuries if used improperly or without guards. Even handheld tools like pruners and shovels can lead to punctures or muscle strain over time.

Slips, Trips, and Falls

Uneven terrain, wet grass, loose rocks, or tree roots make it easy to trip and twist an ankle or fall onto sharp tools. Gardeners often work in unpredictable environments like steep slopes or cluttered areas, where footing is unstable.

Chemical Exposure

- **Fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides** can irritate your skin, lungs, or eyes.
- **Improper handling**—like mixing or spraying without gloves or masks—can lead to burns or poisoning.
- **Drift from chemicals** sprayed nearby can affect you even if you're not directly using them.

Heat and Sun Stress

Working in direct sunlight for hours increases the risk of dehydration, sunburn, or heat exhaustion. This can cause dizziness, fatigue, or in extreme cases, collapse—especially when hydration and shade breaks are skipped.

Noise and Vibration

- **Loud equipment** like chainsaws and blowers can cause hearing damage over time if you're not wearing ear protection.
- **Vibrating tools** can cause hand fatigue or nerve damage when used for long periods without breaks.

Insects, Animals, and Allergens

Bee stings, ticks, or contact with poison ivy or moldy mulch can trigger allergic reactions or infections. Wildlife such as snakes or rodents may be hiding in tall grass or under bushes.

Pro Tip: Do a quick inspection of your work area for nests, hives, or signs of animals before you start your task.

Repetitive Strain Injuries

Raking, lifting, bending, or using clippers repeatedly without breaks or good body mechanics can wear out your joints and

muscles, leading to chronic back, shoulder, or wrist pain.

FINAL WORD

Just because you're outdoors doesn't mean you're out of danger. Lawn, shrub, and garden work can be physically demanding and full of hidden risks. Whether it's a power tool, chemical, or the sun beating down, it only takes one moment of carelessness to end up injured.
