

Know Your Kit

We all want to have an enjoyable day volunteering to help nature, so it is very important that we do so safely without injury. We appreciate you donating your time, but we do not wish you to donate any blood or body parts, thank you!

You will be provided training for all tools and equipment you will use in the work party. DO NOT use a tool that you have not been provided training for, ask for assistance from the course leader if you are unsure about any aspect of work you are doing. DO NOT do anything you are not comfortable with or perceive as risky.

Non kit dangers

There are many things apart from kit that can injure you.

Thorns

There are many spikey bushes that are often tangled up and can suddenly whip with great force when pulled apart. Avoid this happening in your face! Be careful when handling spikey bushes as tress like Hawthorn can have hidden spikes that you do not find until you grab them. ALWAYS wear gloves and eye protection when clearing spikey bushes.

Trees

Trees under tension can hold a lot of energy that can be released in unpredictable ways when cut. Clearance of anything large or under tension or above shoulder height, should not be attempted by volunteers on our work parties.

Heavy Things

Heavy things being dropped on you is another hazard. Volunteers should never be working on things at height, but even dropping a brick on your foot can be very painful. ALWAYS wear decent work boots, preferably with a steel toe cap and heel.

Water

We have lakes and reed beds, the depth of which can change suddenly from one step to the next, where you go from knee deep to head deep in a single step. When working near water it essential to use a stick to measure the depth of the entire area you will be working in. If you are working in water deeper than 2', whenever working in chest waders, where there is a strong current or where the water is obstructed with trip hazards such as trees and reeds, you MUST either wear a life jacket or be roped to a colleague who is capable of physically pulling you out.

Kit

We have categorized our kit into three categories, green, amber and red.

Some rules that apply to all categories:

DO NOT use any tool that seems to be in disrepair, has any loose parts, etc.

DO NOT use any bladed tool or tool that is used by being swung, knives, saws, billhooks, axes, hammers, mallets, etc, with a gloved hand! You MUST use your bare hand to ensure an adequate grip. You can however wear a glove on your other hand to hold materials.

DO NOT use any tool if you are not wearing the correct safety kit or have not been trained in its use.

DO NOT use any sharp tool if it is blunt.




DO NOT use any petrol powered tools.

Green

Kit in this category can be used by any volunteer, once they have been given training to do so.

They are still things you can hurt yourself or others with, so care needs to be taken still, but they are not considered very dangerous.

I have never injured myself with a power tool, but have injured myself many times with hand tools, due to complacency. Hand tools are more susceptible to complacency.

	<p>Pocket Knives</p> <p>These are not very useful for doing actual work, but are used mainly for cutting strimmer line, opening packaging, cutting rope, etc. Any knife used must be of a locking or fixed blade type, that can not fold when being used. DO NOT use with a gloved hand, always grip with a bare hand.</p>
	<p>Secateurs</p> <p>Very useful for pruning and cutting small scrub and branches. The secateurs we use are of a ratchet type, where you can pull the blade multiple times per cut. The ratchet can not be released until the cut is complete, so do not tackle branches thicker than your thumb with these. DO NOT cut anywhere near your or others people's fingers.</p>
	<p>Loppers</p> <p>We have a variety of types and sizes for use on different sized branches. The larger ones tend to be ratchet loppers that must have 3 pulls per cut. Opening the handles fully will release the ratchet at any point, so do not fully open the handles between cuts.</p> <p>These are very safe tools as you can not use them and have your fingers in the way. But still be careful of other people's fingers. Be very careful of cutting suspended branches or those under tension that may suddenly spring when cut.</p>



Billhooks and Hand Axes

Very useful tools for hedge laying and scrub clearance. These are very sharp and will cause significant injury if struck by them.

DO NOT hold with a gloved hand.

DO wear a glove on the other hand.

DO NOT use in the proximity of other people.

Beware of cutting branches that are suspended or under tension that will release suddenly when cut.

Think about where the blade will go if you miss your target, i.e. if the axe misses the log it will hit my leg.

Brushwacker

A very simple tool that is slightly more effective than using a stick to bash brush like stinging nettles and brambles.

Please be aware of the proximity of others when using this.

DO NOT use within 5 metres of other people.

DO NOT use with a gloved hand to ensure adequate grip. A glove can be worn on the other hand.

Amber

Any power tool is automatically Amber, as the power can cause a lot more damage a lot more quickly. Volunteers are generally not allowed to use Amber kit on our volunteer days, unless they have prior experience and are deemed competent by the course leader. When deciding competency the course leader should not only consider the individuals competency but also the size of the group working in proximity to, the extent of their experience and the space available to work in. Make sure people are not in danger to themselves by getting too close.



Pocket Saws

This tool is vicious! These saws use high tensile Japanese steel, cut to fine sharp teeth. They are incredibly sharp, but the blades are also subject to snap quite easily which will make sharp edges and cause you to injure yourself before you have reacted to the break and stopped cutting. DO NOT use these when the blade is loose and easily folds up. DO NOT have any hands anywhere near where you are cutting. DO wear gloves on both hands.

Beware of the blade pinching in branches with tension as this will often break the blade.



Mini Chainsaw (blades less than 6")

This may look cute, but it still packs a punch of cutting power. This chainsaw will require adequate training to use.

It does not self oil automatically, so you need to use the small bottle of bio oil to oil the blade every few cuts.

Only use natural bio oil

DO NOT use with a gloved hand. DO wear a glove on the other hand.

Beware cutting branches that are suspended or under tension. Beware of kick back or the blade being pinched by the branch you are cutting.

Always keep batteries safely away from where they might get hit, struck, damaged or get wet.

DO NOT use if the chain is blunt and cutting is slow.

DO NOT use if the chain is loose, you should not be able to pull the chain out of its runner.

Always disconnect the battery before maintaining the tool or touching the chain.

BEWARE the saw will pull thin branches towards you or draw your hand towards thicker branches. When cutting spikey bushes this sudden pull effect can impale your hand on spikes! When cutting spikey bushes such as Dogrose, Hawthorn, Brambles, you should wear a glove on both hands; but, keep a damn tight grip on the saw as the glove will greatly reduce your ability to hold it firmly. It is far more preferable to use a different tool such as loppers on spikey bushes, then use this saw for the larger items once the spikey branches have been removed.



Strimmer (line configuration only)

These come in two varieties, straight handle with a shoulder strap and bicycle handle.
Only use with strimmer line, do not use the blade attachment (that is category red).
Bicycle handled strimmer must be used with the backpack harness and be clipped on to support it.
Beware of where debris will fly towards, they will throw large stones and debris a considerable distance.
Some are manually loaded with line, others have an auto feed feature, consult the course leader on how to correctly load line.
ALWAYS use eye protection. Use full face protection when strimming near loose gravel or stones, etc.
DO NOT use with a gloved hands.



Hedge Trimmer

This is a very effective tool for maintaining the edges to paths where brambles grow over the path, and for hedges of course.
DO NOT cut things directly above you, stand to the side of where you are cutting.
DO NOT cut branches thicker than your thumb.
Wear eye protection.
DO not use with a gloved hand
Beware of metal such as fencing in the hedge. DO NOT touch metal with the blade.



Long Arm (not extended)

This can only be used in hedge trimmer configuration and on its shortest setting. Using the pole saw configuration or extending the pole makes it a red category tool.
You must wear the backpack harness and have the tool clipped to it. DO NOT drop the tool, or drag it.
DO NOT use force when using the pole.
Do not use for extended periods and make sure the weight is balanced to not excessively strain your back.
Never cut directly above you, always stand to the side.
Take regular breaks, stop before your back aches.
DO NOT use within 6m of other people.



Battery Backpack

Must be adjusted to fit you properly for comfortable working and sound securing of the tool.
Be mindful of the backpack cable getting snagged on things or becoming a trip hazard.
Make sure battery is securely clipped in.
DO clip tools to the crotch plate hook
Always strap in and buckle both front buckles



Lithium Batteries

We use 3 common types of battery EGO, Stihl, DeWalt.
They can only be used with tools from the same manufacturer.
DO NOT drop, strike or damage, DO NOT allow to get wet.
Only use the 12Ah batteries with the backpack.
Only use original manufacturers chargers.

Red

Red tools are the dangerous things that are not to be used during normal volunteer days. Chainsaws and anything motorised, anything that requires certification or insurance, falls into this category. So I'm afraid the volunteers do not get to drive the tractor.

The only people authorised to use red category tools are the trustees and people authorised by the trustees who are qualified and insured to do so. This will only be done in special small work parties where everybody in attendance is experienced and competent.

	<p>Chain Saw</p> <p>A very useful tool for cutting large trees and wood. Only to be used by a competent person with specific authorisation from a Trustee of the charity. Adhering to all common best practice that a professional would employ. Specific care needs to be taken for public places, where a spotter and signage will be needed whilst working. Beware of fencing that is embedded in the trees on site. All standard chainsaw safety wear to be worn. Only use bio oil.</p>
	<p>Long Arm (extended)</p> <p>Same as long arm not extended, but requires people to be clear by a 10m radius around you.</p>
	<p>Brushcutter</p> <p>This tool will really kick when it hits something! Only to be used on brush where there is nothing solid to hit. Beware of old metalwork, fencing and bricks, embedded throughout the site. Do not use near trees. You MUST wear boots with armoured front and sides such as Kevlar inserts. Only ever use on bicycle handle strimmers. Only ever use when securely attached to a full harness. DO NOT use within 10m of other people. Restrict public access using spotters and signage when using in public areas. ALWAYS use full face protection.</p>



Pole Saw

The pole saw on the long arm fully extended, will give you 4.5m beyond the height of your head access. It can be used unclipped from the harness in order to hold above your head. But this gets tiring really quickly!

Only to be used by a competent person with specific authorisation from a Trustee of the charity. Adhering to all common best practice that a professional would employ. Only use bio oil.



Tractor/Bucket/Flail

Only to be used by a competent person with specific authorisation from a Trustee of the charity. Adhering to all common best practice that a professional would employ. Operators will also need a full UK driving license and be added to the charities insurance.

Safety Kit

Please do bring your own PPE if possible, but otherwise you will be provided with gloves and eye protection. You will be provided a hard hat and ear defenders if the work requires it. You are responsible for wearing adequate footwear which must at the very least be rugged boots. The course leader may refuse your participation if your footwear is inadequate to keep you safe.

Gloves must be heavy duty leather or leather substitute and be thorn proof.

Eye protection which seals to the face is better for tree work or working in dusty conditions as they keep the dust out of your eyes. Open goggles are better when doing manual work in the heat as they do not fog up as much. DO NOT work with fogged up goggles, even if you have to constantly stop to clear them. Helmets with visors are an acceptable alternative to goggles and are far less prone to fogging up.

	<p>Gloves</p> <p>Thick, thornproof. Beware what thornproof really means, if you grab a Hawthorn tightly on a large thorn it will pierce the glove and your hand. Handle spikey bushes gently.</p> <p>All our gloves are made of real leather, if you do not wish to use leather, then please bring your own leather alternative. You can not participate in a volunteer day without gloves. Please bring your own if possible, we can provide if not.</p>
	<p>Safety/Chainsaw Boots</p> <p>If you are only using green category tools, then any rugged, hiking type boot is acceptable.</p> <p>For amber or red tools you must wear safety boots with at least a metal toe and heel cap.</p> <p>Preferably CAT A chainsaw boots, with metal soul plate and Kevlar inserts on front and sides (as pictured).</p> <p>You must provide your own footwear.</p>
	<p>Safety Goggles</p> <p>You will not be allowed to participate in our volunteer days without safety goggles.</p> <p>Please bring your own if possible, we can provide if not.</p> <p>Hard hats or helmets with full face mask is an acceptable alternative to goggles.</p>
	<p>Ear Defenders</p> <p>Most of our kit is electric these days and isn't noisy enough to require ear defence. But please do use for any loud noise or prolonged exposure to noise. The electric chainsaws can still cause damage with prolonged use.</p> <p>The tractor and flail requires proper ear defenders.</p> <p>External or internal is your choice, but must be adequate for the noise level you are exposed to.</p>



Hard Hats & Helmets

Use a hard hat or helmet whenever working at height or when cutting anything above shoulder height.

The Box System

When working in groups it is very important to not wander into harms way whilst some one is working. If they are working they can not be expected to notice you, it is your responsibility to keep out of their way. With larger groups this becomes quite hard to manage, so we use the box system.

- Each team of 2 or 3 people are assigned a box
- A box is 5m x 5m
- DO NOT enter some ones box whilst they are working
- DO NOT allow any of your tools, or materials you are working on to stray into someone else's box e.g. swinging tools, falling trees
- NEVER tap someone on the shoulder, touch them or approach them whilst they are cutting

Sea lanes

When clearing land or moving materials, we may have many people moving along the same route back and forth. Here we use a sea lanes system where channels are established that go from one place to another, without crossing any boxes. Never allow any falling materials, tools or obstructions to stray into the established paths. Anyone using the path has right of way over someone crossing the path. Where paths cross anyone carrying something has right of way, if both people are carrying something, the one carrying the largest or heaviest thing has right of way; but generally just use common sense and politeness.

Tailored for your day

Your course leader will talk though what systems are used for a day, as it will be tailored to the nature of the work and the location.

The course leader will go through a risk assessment with you, that is tailored for the work in hand that day. You must then sign a liability waiver form, that means you are responsible for your own safety. Do not sign that form unless you have received a health and safety briefing including a risk assessment specifically for the course that day, and also read this guide for the tools that you will be using. You can not participate in the day without signing the waiver and NEWT does not have any insurance to cover you or your possessions wellbeing. You must raise any issue or concern with the course leader and never do anything that you are not entirely comfortable with or feel competent to do.

If you are unsure about the rules for the day, the location you are in, or the work you are doing; you must ask the course leader before working. Please ask, do not feel silly, we are here to help you enjoy a fulfilling and safe day.