



ShedBuilder



The Grandparents' Garden Checklist

Getting the garden ready for the small visitors. One pass before they arrive, a few gentle habits while they stay, and the garden goes back to being what it should be: the best place on earth.

BEFORE YOU START

Why this checklist exists

Every summer, Britain's grandparents quietly become the country's biggest childcare provider. The gardens they open up are the most interesting gardens a child ever gets: real tools, real greenhouses, real ponds, and an adult with real time. This checklist deals with the one small shadow over all that joy, the quiet thought that the garden last saw a toddler decades ago, so that you can stop thinking about it and get on with the jam sandwiches.

5m+

UK grandparents
provide regular
childcare

2½ wks

average summer-
holiday care per
family

100k+

children hurt in UK
gardens each year

10 min

is all the garden pass
takes

Almost every garden accident in the figures above was preventable, and almost all of the preventing is quick, cheap and invisible. Nothing here is about wrapping children in cotton wool. Children need mud, worms and the smell of a creosoted fence. The checklist buys freedom: theirs to roam, and yours to relax.

How to use it

1. **The day before they arrive**, walk the garden with pages 3 to 5 and a pencil. Tick as you go; most items take seconds.
2. **On arrival**, teach the two child rules cheerfully: nothing from the garden goes in mouths, and water is a together place.
3. **During the stay**, keep the four on-the-day habits on page 5 running. They matter more than any single tick.
4. **Fill in page 6** (the emergency page) once, and leave it on the fridge for anyone minding the children at yours.

The shed, tools and poisons



The shed & workshop

- ☐ **Shed locked whenever you are not in it**, key out of sight and out of reach (never left in the padlock).

- ☐ Saws, shears, secateurs and chisels **hung above child height**, not resting on the bench.

- ☐ Power tools disarmed: **batteries out** and stored separately, mains tools unplugged.

- ☐ Petrol minimal, capped, in a proper container, **up high**. Ladders stored flat, not leaning.

- ☐ **No job left mid-way**: nothing plugged in, nothing balanced, nothing "just for a minute".



Garden chemicals

- ☐ Everything in **original containers**: nothing decanted into pop bottles or jars, ever.

- ☐ Slug pellets, rodent bait, weedkiller, white spirit and wood treatment **up high in the locked shed**.

- ☐ Any bait or pellets **scattered outdoors** accounted for or cleared.

- ☐ Museum pieces at the back of the shelf taken to the **council waste site**, not the bin.



Medicines (the big one)

- ☐ All medication **high up in one closed cupboard** for the duration of the stay.

- ☐ **Handbags and coat pockets** (yours and visitors') hung up, off the floor and sofas.

- ☐ Bedside tables and the shelf by the kettle **cleared of tablets**; pill organisers put away straight after use. A grandparent's medication is one of the most common causes of child poisoning.

Water, boundaries and glass



Water: quick, quiet, respected

- ☐ **Pond** fenced, grilled just under the surface, or agreed as the never-alone zone. A child can drown in centimetres, in silence.
- ☐ **Water butts lidded** and clips on; the watering can moved so it cannot serve as a step.
- ☐ **Paddling pool emptied** the moment playing stops, not at bedtime.
- ☐ Buckets, trugs and wheelbarrows holding rainwater **tipped every morning**.



Gates, boundaries & the drive

- ☐ **Boundary walked**: no toddler-sized gaps behind the shrubs, fence panels sound.
- ☐ **Side and front gates latch properly**, above a four-year-old's reach if possible.
- ☐ The **car rule agreed with every adult**: children in the house or holding a hand whenever a car on the drive is about to move, including the parents arriving to collect.



Greenhouse, cold frames & glass

- ☐ Greenhouse and cold frames **latched**; agreed as with-grandad places, not play places.
- ☐ **Cracked panes replaced now** (greenhouse and shed windows), safety film on low panes if the visits are regular.
- ☐ **Bamboo canes topped** (corks work) so nothing sits at running-child face height.

Plants, play and fire



Plants & berries (calmly)

- ☐ Know your handful: **foxglove, laburnum, yew berries, monkshood, lily of the valley**. No digging up required, just awareness.
- ☐ The rule taught on arrival, cheerfully: **nothing from the garden goes in mouths** unless a grown-up handed it over. The strawberry patch is the glorious exception.



Play equipment

- ☐ Inherited swings and climbing frames **shaken hard**; ropes and chains checked for fray and rust; what fails, retires with honour.
- ☐ **Landing surfaces checked** (grass over old concrete is not soft); trampoline: net on, springs covered, one child at a time.



Fire & the barbecue

- ☐ Barbecue and fire pit **out of the running line**; a filled watering can standing beside them on duty.
- ☐ **Ash treated as live** until soaked: a disposable barbecue stays burn-hot for hours after the sausages.
- ☐ Matches, firelighters and lighter fluid **up high in the locked shed**.

The four on-the-day habits

- 1 **The interrupted-job rule.** Doorbell, kettle, phone: tools down safe and shed locked at every break, not just at the end. Interruptions, not jobs, are when accidents happen.
- 2 **The water rule.** Water play is a together activity. Always. No "just while I answer the door".
- 3 **The car rule.** House, or hand held, whenever a car on the drive moves.
- 4 **Their own corner.** A child-height bed or big pot that is theirs, with their own little trowel and watering can kept outside the shed. No reason to follow you into the workshop, every reason to love your garden forever.

The emergency page

Fill this in once. In a flap, nobody remembers numbers, and a visiting babysitter or the other grandparents will thank you for it.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

999

Fire, police, ambulance. From a mobile, 112 also works.

NHS ADVICE (NON-EMERGENCY)

111

Unsure if it needs A&E? Call 111 first, day or night.

MUM & DAD

THIS ADDRESS (SAY IT TO THE OPERATOR)

GP SURGERY

ALLERGIES & MEDICATION NOTES

If a child swallows something they should not have: do not make them sick. Take the container or plant with you, and call 111, or 999 if they are drowsy, struggling to breathe or fitting.

About this checklist. Made by ShedBuilder, the UK's free shed design tool, as a free resource for the 5 million grandparents who quietly run Britain's summer childcare. The full guide behind it, covering every point in more detail, lives at shedbuild.co.uk/guides/grandparents-garden-checklist.php. Print it, share it, pass it to the other grandparents, pin it up at the allotment. That is what it is for.

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