

Gardens



This page is intended to help you to use electrical equipment safely in the garden and avoid electrical accidents. The risk of an electric shock causing serious injury or death, is greater outdoors than indoors, due to possible wet conditions and physical contact with the ground.

Residual Current Devices

An RCD is a safety device that switches off the electricity automatically when it detects an earth fault. Any socket-outlet that may be used for plugging in portable electrical equipment that is to be used outdoors, should have RCD protection.

Check that you are protected by an RCD with a maximum rated residual operating current of 30 milliamperes (mA). If your socket-outlet is not protected by an RCD, purchase a good quality plug-in RCD adaptor from a reputable dealer, as a temporary measure. The safest option is to get a registered installer to install permanent RCD protection to all socket-outlets that may be used for plugging in 230 V outdoor portable electrical equipment.

RCDs need to be tested quarterly by the users of the electrical installation, in accordance with the notice that should be fixed near them. This normally involves pressing the test button and checking that the RCD switches off the supply immediately. Regular testing is important, to ensure correct operation of the RCD mechanism in the event of a fault.

Lawn mowing

Electric lawn mowers can cut through electric cables causing a real risk of electric shock. There is also a risk of injury from contact with rotating parts.

For Safety:

- buy a good quality lawn mower from a reputable retailer
- follow manufacturers' instructions closely

- keep the lawn mower, cables, connections and plug, free from damage
- check that the socket-outlet has RCD protection
- do not cut grass in wet conditions
- test the RCD using its test button unless you are certain that the RCD has been tested within the last 3 months
- wear shoes that give foot protection (not sandals)
- keep children well away from the lawn mower
- do not pull a lawn mower close to your feet or the flexible cable
- unplug the lawn mower and wait until the blades have stopped rotating, before carrying out any activities such as cleaning grass blockages.
- Following manufacturers' instructions, checking the lawn mower is in good order, and being careful when cutting the grass, will reduce the risk of an accident.

Hedge trimming

Electric hedge trimmers can cut through electric cables, causing the risk of electric shock. They may also injure anyone making contact with the blades.

For Safety:

- buy a good quality hedge trimmer from a reputable retailer
- follow manufacturers' instructions closely
- wear gloves and goggles to protect your hands and eyes
- keep children well away from the hedge trimmer
- do not cut hedges in wet conditions
- check that the socket-outlet has RCD protection
- test the RCD using its test button unless you are certain that the RCD has been tested within the last 3 months
- keep the hedge trimmer cable, connections and plug free from damage
- keep both hands on the handles provided.
- Unplug the hedge trimmer before carrying out any activities such as removing jammed hedge trimmings.

Water pumps for garden ponds

Incorrectly installed or damaged 230 V electrical water pumps in garden ponds, may create a serious electric shock risk in and around the pond, resulting in injury or death. This is because the risk of electric shock is higher in the presence of water.

A 230 V electric water pump in the garden should be:

- good quality and be purchased from a reputable retailer

- protected by an RCD, that is tested by means of the integral test button at least every 3 months
- installed in accordance with manufacturers' instructions
- provided with cables that are protected against accidental damage
- maintained in good working order, including cables and any connections
- switched off when carrying out pond cleaning.

If any defects are found, switch off the water pump's electrical supply immediately and have the pump repaired by a competent electrician.

Damaged flexible cables and connectors

If any defects are found, switch off the water pump's electrical supply immediately and have the pump repaired by a competent electrician.

Cables and connections should be:

- good quality and be purchased from a reputable retailer
- suitable for use outdoors
- suitable for the equipment used
- free from damage and kept clean
- used in accordance with manufacturers' instructions
- switched off when carrying out pond cleaning.
- located to prevent anyone tripping over the cable
- routed to prevent them being damaged e.g. stepped on or cut
- kept as dry as possible

If any damage is found, unplug from the electrical supply immediately, and have the damaged items replaced. Always take care not to damage flexible cables and connectors.

Unwinding extension cable from the wheel

When in use, extension cables that are coiled up on a reel can overheat, causing damage to the cable, which may in extreme cases result in fire. Such extreme damage may also introduce a risk of electric shock, which could cause injury or prove to be fatal.

A fully unwound cable reduces the risk of it overheating, thereby minimizing the risks of fire or electric shock.

Wet conditions

Do not use electrical equipment when it is raining or in areas that are being watered. The risk of serious injury and even death from electric shock, are far higher in wet conditions, than in the

dry. Ground conditions may also be slippery in the wet, which increases the risk of an accident. Electrical equipment may also suffer damage in wet conditions.

Using electrical equipment in the garden in dry conditions reduces the risk of an accident.

Garden lighting



Incorrectly selected, installed or damaged 230 V outdoor lighting installations may create a risk of electric shock, resulting in serious injury or even death.

For 230 V lighting in the garden:

- buy good quality electrical outdoor lighting equipment from a reputable retailer
- make sure outdoor lighting fittings (luminaires) are weatherproof
- ensure lighting fittings used for water features are waterproof
- have it installed by a competent electrician in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and BS 7671 - Requirements for Electrical Installations (IEE Wiring Regulations), which is the national safety standard for electrical installation work
- check for damaged lighting fittings, cables and connections
- remove leaves and dirt from lighting fittings

If any faults are found, switch off the electrical supply immediately, and have them repaired by a registered installer.

All information taken from the Electrical Safety Council website www.esc.org.uk