

It's My Park | Important Safety Tips

Last Updated: November 29, 2023

Phone Numbers:

- Your NYC Parks contact (community engagement coordinator (CEC), parks and recreation manager (PRM), or other NYC Parks staff member)
- 311 for non-emergency concerns when your NYC Parks contact is unavailable
- 911 for emergencies

Preparedness Before the Project:

- Weather - We recommend checking the updated forecast before a project to be mindful of any potential concerns such as storms or heat warnings.
- First aid kit - Make sure that someone on site will have a first-aid kit and will be able to access quickly if needed.
- Other items you will need - Wear closed-toe shoes and bring along a reusable water bottle. Depending on the project, you may need bug repellent, sun block, and other forms of sun protection, like a hat.

Preparedness During the Project:

- Cross streets - Take note of the nearest cross streets before starting your volunteer project, in case an emergency responder needs to be called to your location.
- Safety in numbers - We recommend volunteering with others. It's safer because you can watch out for one another, and it's more fun.
- NYPD call box - Be aware if there is a working NYPD call box within the work area.

Common Safety Concerns and Prevention:

- Hazardous materials (ex. hypodermic needles, biohazardous materials, feces, dead animals, etc.)
 - Do not handle these materials.
 - Needles and medical waste - Notify NYC Parks staff. All medical waste and sharp objects should be disposed of in a biohazard box, located in each Park House. If NYC Parks staff is on site, let them know of the location of the hazardous material. If no NYC Parks staff are available, call 311 and let the dispatcher know details about the materials and location.
 - Glass or other non-contaminated material - Wrap sharp edges in newspaper and dispose of in a trash can or garbage bags.

- Weapons - Call 911. Do not touch the weapon, as it may have been used in a crime and could be evidence.
- Dead animals - Notify Parks staff or 311.
- Wounded animals - Call 311 and ask for information to be relayed to the Urban Park Rangers.
- Disorderly members of the public:
 - If you observe a member of the public behaving in a disorderly manner or violating NYC Parks rules, notify NYC Parks staff or call 311 to request the help of Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP). If possible, move your project out of the way of the disorderly individual.
 - If you are concerned that the disorderly person poses an immediate threat to yourself or others, call 911.
- Poisonous plant ID and prevention

Poison Ivy

- Three leaves
- Hairy vine on trees



Poison Oak

- Three leaves
- Individual leaves resemble oak leaves
- May be a low growing shrub or vine



Poison Sumac

- Complex leaves made up of 13 little leaves - six are paired, and one stands out on its own
- Stem of the leaf is typically red but not always



Prevention Measures:

- Wear long pants and closed-toe shoes when working on horticulture projects.
- Check in with NYC Parks staff or your community engagement coordinator before a project or while on a site visit to discuss the presence of these plants on your work site.
- Alert other volunteers working with you about the potential risk and point out any plants so they can ID them while working.

- If possible, bring Tecnu cleanser to any projects where you or other volunteers risk exposure. Tecnu removes any oils that may have come onto your skin from the plants and helps prevent rashes.