

# Using electrical equipment outdoors



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# What are the dangers of using electrical equipment in the garden?

Although electricity makes gardening much easier, wet conditions and contact with the ground means that the risk of injury or death from electric shock is much greater than the risk from using electrical equipment indoors.

Many garden accidents happen because someone handles equipment carelessly, doesn't concentrate properly or fails to follow the manufacturer's instructions. By following simple safety rules every time you work in a garden, you can easily avoid a serious accident.

**We have produced this leaflet to help you to avoid accidents caused by using electrical equipment outdoors.**



## Tips for working safely in the garden

### Always

- use a residual current device (RCD) for all outdoor electrical equipment, and use the 'test' button regularly to check that it is working correctly (an RCD switches off the electricity automatically if there is an electrical fault);
- check electrical equipment, including plugs and extension leads, for damage before you use it;
- get damaged cables and plugs replaced before you use the equipment;
- buy good-quality electrical equipment from a manufacturer you trust (look for the BEAB label or 'Kitemark' safety symbol);
- wear protective clothing and footwear;
- take care when you are digging – electric, gas and water services may be buried below;
- follow manufacturer's instructions – many accidents happen because safety instructions were ignored; and
- store electrical equipment in a dry place where children can't reach it.

### Never

- use electrical equipment in the garden when it is raining;
- clean, adjust or check equipment while it is connected to the electricity supply;
- touch damaged equipment and cables before switching off the electricity supply;
- try to repair equipment yourself;
- wash equipment with water – unplug the equipment and clean it with a dry cloth;
- use electrical equipment while barefoot or wearing sandals; or
- leave electrical equipment plugged in while you are not using it.



## Why do I need a residual current device (RCD) when I use electrical equipment outdoors?

An RCD can be a lifesaver. Without it, if you cut through an electrical lead, a simple job like mowing the lawn could kill you. An RCD is a safety device that switches off electricity automatically if there is an electrical fault.

All equipment such as lawnmowers, hedge trimmers, and other power tools when you use them outdoors, should only be plugged into a socket protected by an RCD.

To protect you against electric shock, the rated tripping current of the RCD must be 30milliamperes (mA). If you haven't got sockets that are protected by an RCD you should buy and use a portable RCD. When buying a portable RCD check that it is clearly marked to show that it meets British Standard 7071, its

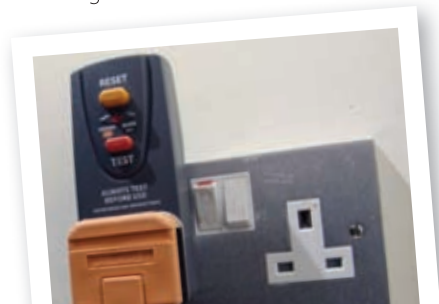
rated current is 13amps and its rated tripping current is 30 milliamperes (mA).

A more permanent and possibly safer solution than using a portable RCD is to get a registered electrician to provide RCD protection for all the sockets in your home that can be used for outdoor equipment.

Having RCD protection is a condition of the national safety standard for all sockets in new electrical installations, and for any new sockets added to an existing installation. You

can find details of registered electricians on our website, [www.esc.org.uk](http://www.esc.org.uk).

Whatever the type of RCD you have in your home, you must regularly test it by using the 'test' button on the device. You should test portable RCDs every time you use them. However, do not press the test button for a long time if the device does not trip. If the RCD does not switch off the electricity supply when you press the test button, get advice from a registered electrician.



## Extension leads, cables and connections

If you do not check the condition of extension leads, cables and connections and use them correctly, you could get an electric shock.

### For safety make sure they are:

- suitable for outdoor use – weather-resistant with moulded connections that prevent moisture seeping in;
- rated correctly to suit the equipment you want to connect to them;
- uncoiled, to prevent them from overheating;
- kept clean and free from damage;
- replaced if damage is found;
- used according to the manufacturer's instructions;
- positioned appropriately to prevent them being damaged; and
- kept dry.

## Who should carry out electrical work in my home?

If you need RCD protection for sockets in your home, the work should be carried out only by people who have the knowledge, skill and experience to do the job. It's easy to make an electrical circuit work – it's far harder to make the circuit work safely.

We strongly recommend you use a registered electrician to carry out any work that needs doing.

Registered electricians will work to the UK national safety standard BS 7671 (Requirements for Electrical Installations) and will give you a safety certificate to confirm that the installation has been designed, built, inspected and tested in line with that standard.



**Always work sensibly and safely when using electrical equipment outdoors.**



## The Electrical Safety Council

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