



Leafy Legends Forest School Tool Use Policy

Ethos & Intent

At Leafy Legends, we believe that tools offer children powerful opportunities for **real-world skill-building**, **creative expression**, and **confidence through risk**. We introduce tools in a way that is **respectful**, **intentional**, and **emotionally safe**, always guided by our Forest School values: trust, connection, and curiosity.

Tool use is never about rushing toward outcomes — it's about the process, the presence, and the pride children feel when they shape something with their own hands.

Tools We Use

Children may be introduced to the following tools, depending on age, readiness, and session focus:

Tool	Purpose
Peelers	Whittling sticks, bark removal
Loppers	Cutting green wood
Bow saws	Cutting larger branches
Hammers	Tapping tent pegs, simple construction
Hand drills	Making holes in wood
Secateurs	Trimming small branches
Mallets	Gentle striking, den building

All tools are **age-appropriate**, **risk-assessed**, and introduced gradually.

Safety Principles

We follow the “Three C’s” of tool safety:

1. **Consent** – Children choose whether to engage. No tool use is ever forced.
2. **Competence** – We assess readiness and offer scaffolded support.
3. **Calm** – Tools are only used when children are regulated and focused.

Additional safety measures include:

- One-to-one or small group supervision
- Clear demonstration before use

- Designated tool zones with boundaries
- PPE as needed (e.g. gloves)
- Safe storage and regular maintenance of tools
- First aid kit on site and staff trained in paediatric first aid

Emotional Safety

Tool use can evoke strong feelings — pride, frustration, fear, excitement. We hold space for these emotions and support children through co-regulation, gentle encouragement, and reflective pauses.

Children are never shamed for mistakes. Instead, we use them as learning moments, reinforcing trust and resilience.

Inclusion & Adaptation

We adapt tool use for children with additional needs, sensory sensitivities, or trauma backgrounds. This may include:

- Using alternative tools (e.g. plastic peelers)
- Offering visual guides or social stories
- Providing noise-reducing headphones
- Allowing observation before participation
- Creating quiet tool zones with fewer stimuli

Staff Responsibilities

- Complete tool-specific risk assessments
- Model safe and respectful tool use
- Maintain tools and check for damage
- Record any incidents or near misses
- Debrief with children after tool sessions
- Ensure tools are stored securely

Review & Updates

This policy is reviewed annually or after any incident involving tools. Feedback from children, staff, and families is welcomed and informs our evolving practice.

