



Safeguarding Statement

Version 1: Last reviewed and adopted by the Committee on 30 April 2026.

The current version of this Statement is available at <https://exoticferngroup.org/values>.

Scope: This document outlines the standards of conduct for members representing the Exotic Fern Group (EFG) when interacting with children (under 18s) and vulnerable adults at public or third-party events, and builds upon the framework established in the EFG Code of Conduct.

The EFG is keen to inspire the next generation of botanists. Members should answer children's questions with enthusiasm, ensuring that the accompanying adult is always included in the discussion and that the interaction remains in an open and public setting.

1. General Principles

While EFG membership is restricted to those aged 18 and over, our presence at public shows and botanical events means we may interact with the public. All members acting on behalf of the Society must:

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity.
- Avoid being alone with a child or vulnerable adult (stay in public view).
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact.
- No private messaging with minors, no exchanging personal contact details, and no photography without the consent of their accompanying adult.
- Members should not investigate concerns, but must report them.
- When answering questions from a minor, members should engage enthusiastically but ensure the accompanying parent or guardian is included in the conversation. Use the opportunity to talk to both the child and the adult together.

2. Identifying Children at Events

If a person who appears to be under 18 attempts to join an EFG-organised event, members should follow these steps:

A. Immediate Identification

If you realise someone is under 18 at the start of an event:

- Kindly inform them that EFG events and memberships are for those aged 18 and over.
- Ask if they are accompanied by an adult.

B. Mid-Event Discovery

If it becomes apparent during an event that a participant is under 18:

- Do not abruptly exclude them in a way that causes distress, but move them to a communal/public area immediately.
- Confirm their age and whether a parent or guardian is nearby.

In the event a child (under 18) is identified as being at an event without a parent, guardian or responsible adult, please follow the steps given in section 4.

3. Vulnerable Adults

The same principles of respect and public visibility apply to vulnerable adults. If a vulnerable adult appears distressed or is unaccompanied and seems unable to look after their own safety, please follow the steps given in section 4.

4. Safeguarding Actions

1. **Safety First:** Ensure the person remains in a safe, visible and public location. Two adults should remain present; never leave a child or vulnerable adult alone or take them into a private space (for example, a back room or vehicle).
2. **Contact Event Organisers:** If at a third-party venue (for example, an RHS show or botanical garden), immediately notify the venue's official safeguarding officer or floor manager.
3. **Local Authorities:** If the event is hosted solely by EFG and no guardian can be located, contact the local non-emergency police line (101) for guidance. Do not attempt to transport a child or vulnerable adult yourself.

5. Reporting

Any safeguarding incidents or 'near misses' must be reported to the EFG Committee within 24 hours of the event, following the directions given in the Code of Conduct 'Safeguarding' section.

Implementation Tip

Remember, we are plant enthusiasts and not necessarily trained to work with children or vulnerable adults. The 'Golden Rule' is to be: **Visible, Vocal** and **Verifiable**. Keep all interactions in the open, speak clearly and always have a second person present if a safeguarding situation arises.

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