

Tips to nip garden crime in the bud

Easy pickings?

Although many people take steps to protect their homes and the property inside them, they leave valuable equipment in gardens and unsecured sheds, providing easy pickings for opportunist thieves.

Power tools, mowers, garden tools, mountain bikes and golf clubs are just some examples of expensive equipment left in sheds that are not strong or secure enough to protect them from thieves. To make matters worse, these stolen items could then be used to break into your house.

Around 1500 shed burglaries take place every year within West Mercia, which highlights the importance of storing valuable items securely.

Effective garden security covers everything from boundary fences and gates to the valuables stored inside your shed. Follow the tips through the leaflet to find out how you can 'weed out' garden thieves.

Defensive planting: nature's way of beating the burglar

Everyone enjoys having a well kept, attractive garden and there's no reason why upping the security in your garden should mean otherwise.



'Defensive planting' is the term used to describe the way you can use certain prickly plants, bushes and shrubs to deter burglars.

This green-leaved security measure is not meant to replace, but to complement other security measures, such as lighting, locks and alarms.

Grow your own security: a few examples



Berberis

Has sharp spine-like prickles. Reaches 6ft. Good for hedging and growing by walls.



Pyracantha

A vigorous evergreen shrub with white flowers in May, followed by orange or red berries. Great for hedging or growing under windows.



Rosa Rugosa "Rubra"

A flowering shrub with densely prickled stems. Can reach 6ft. Excellent as an impenetrable hedge.



Holly

Usually grown as a small tree or large bush. Can reach up to 50ft. Spiny, glossy dark green leaves all year round. Excellent hedging plant.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Hawthorn, Japonica and Acanthus are just a few other examples. Ask for advice at your local garden centre.

Think about using defensive planting around vulnerable areas such as windows, fences, boundary walls and drainpipes.

Remember:

Household insurance policies should be checked to ensure they cover garden and shed equipment and whether or not any minimum security standards apply.



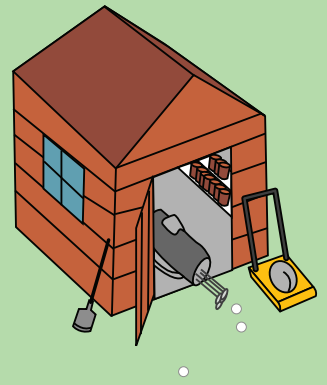
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Don't give thieves 'shedloads' of opportunities!

Most garden sheds are not designed for safe storage. Expensive items such as power tools, mowers, garden tools, bicycles and golf clubs should not be stored in them.

If you have no alternative, follow these shed security tips:

- Keep your shed in good condition.
- Fit a close-shackle padlock to the door.
- Fit grilles or mesh to the windows.
- Large items stored in the shed should be chained together – it is more difficult for a thief to carry away a lot of large heavy items all at once.
- All items stored in a shed should be property marked and registered on Immobilise, the national property marking website (www.immobilise.com).



Let there be light!

Well positioned external lighting is a great way of keeping intruders at bay and can be purchased from most large DIY stores.

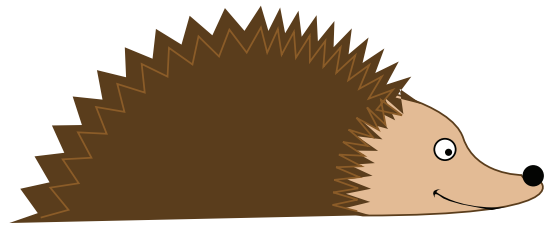


Protecting your boundaries







The boundaries of your property are your first line of defence against burglars. Strong gates, fences and walls which are kept in good repair can deter intruders from getting to the back and sides of your property.

Make sure:

- Rear garden fences are high enough to make climbing them difficult. A trellis can be used to add additional height.
- Side gates are positioned as close to the front of the house as possible. Thieves will be put off by the fact that they are in full view of the neighbours.
- Gates are kept locked at all times.



Top tips for a safer garden:

-  Gates, fences and walls should be kept in good repair to stop intruders getting in.
-  Grow prickly plants close to vulnerable areas such as windows, fences, boundary walls and drainpipes.
-  Don't leave expensive equipment like garden tools, mowers, mountain bikes and power tools in the shed.
-  If you have nowhere else to store valuable equipment, take measures to secure your shed.
-  Don't leave ladders and tools lying around in your garden - these could be used to break into your home.
-  Mark your garden tools and equipment with your postcode.

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