

**CRIME PREVENTION**

**-ALLOTMENTS-**

Theft of property from allotment sheds continues within our county. Thieves are now aware that many householders whilst improving the security of their homes tend to overlook potential ‘softer’ targets elsewhere. Rewards for thieves are good. Property stored in allotment sheds can in many cases total £100’s if not £1000’s.

This document is intended to give you some basic crime prevention advise that if put in place, will provide a better chance of securing your property and lessen your chances of being a victim of crime.

**General site security**

The recommended height for perimeter fencing surrounding your garden is 1.8m. Repair any holes or opportunities to crawl underneath. Overhanging tree limbs which aid climbing should be removed.

When considering new fencing, if possible chain link should be avoided as it is inherently weak, welded mesh is preferable and gives better security.

Whilst hedgerows are a good deterrent (especially thorn bearing varieties), keep height around the front of your home at waist height to aid visibility.

Take a weekend and mark your garden equipment and take the serial numbers and register with Immobilise.com, the national property register. Marking your property with your house number in bright paint makes it undesirable to steal.

Thorny climbers that can grow over sheds are good; again these are a hindrance to would be thieves.

Don’t leave materials around that can easily be set fire to or be used to enable crime to be committed.

Do you have ‘security’ lighting? In an area where you are **not** overlooked this is convenience lighting. Automatic sensors are great for lighting your way but in isolated areas give light for thieves to work by. Consider lighting the rear of your home by an interior switch instead, the light can then be controlled by you. At the front of your property, low energy dawn to dusk lighting is environmentally friendly and cheap to run and enables you and passersby to see who is at the front door.

**Sheds and outbuildings**

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The door, doorframe and walls should be sound. Damaged or rotten sections must be replaced.

Door hinges and pad bars (hasps and staples) should be secured with threaded coach bolts with back plates or large back washers. Many hasps are easily wrenched free if this is not done. Disable any externally visible screw heads.

Use good quality close shackle padlocks, as these cannot be easily levered or cut.

BIG in the padlock world does not necessarily mean best. Buy quality from a manufacturer you recognise. Cheap padlocks will let you down.

Do you need a window in your store? If not board over securely. Perspex or polycarbonate sheet are useful if fixed well.

If you do need the additional light, fit wire mesh or bars to windows.

Consider fitting net curtains or cheap blinds to keep prying eyes away from the contents of your shed.

Any opening windows should have key operated locks fitted or be screwed shut.

Consider lining the shed with plywood sheeting. This is difficult for a criminal to get through without proper tools and lots of time.

Consider a battery operated shed alarm available from DIY stores or local locksmiths. Even if your garden is not overlooked, an alarm is a good deterrent with the intention of frightening off any would be thief.

Inside the shed chain any tools though their handles to large heavy items such as lawn mowers or cultivators. If you have neither of these fill a bucket with concrete and, using a masonry fixing, chain your tools to this.

Gravelled areas surrounding, and pathways leading to, sheds can be a good noisy deterrent.

**Property**

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There is probably a lot of valuable property in your shed or outbuilding. We know not enough attention is paid to security in these areas as there should be. Power tools, lawnmowers, and hand tools are expensive to replace and attractive to thieves.

Do you have a list of serial numbers? Register them with Immobilise.com the national property register. This will help Police detain thieves and return your property.

If you have to keep valuable items in a shed, store them in a strong lockable box/cage that can be secured to the ground or chain them to a metal ring fixed in concrete.

**Property Marking**

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What is “property marking”? Well, it’s a method of marking your property with an indelible identification. Once this is done it makes it harder for thieves to sell it on and if it is found, police can trace it straight back to you.

Firstly, identify those items that can be safely marked and are of value to you. Remember, its not just monetary value we are talking about you must include any treasured possessions regardless of their cost.

Then use one of the DNA property marking systems available, such as Smartwater, SlectaDNA or through Crimestoppers. These solutions can be used on any item including jewellery and it’s simple, quick and easy. Remember to return the registration form!

Property marking deters thieves and helps the police to return stolen property. It is a good idea to advertise the fact you have marked your property as this in itself is a good deterrent.

Thieves want items that they can sell on quickly and that cannot be traced, therefore marking property is very effective.

Thieves have an easy job nowadays selling on second hand items and make good use of car boot sales in and out of the area they have been stolen from, if items are unsightly or heavily marked then it makes it harder to sell on. Even if the worse happens and the property is stolen, the likelihood of your property being returned is much greater if it is marked.

**Dealing with suspicious incidents/intruder**

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If there is anyone in your street that looks like they might be about to commit a crime or acting suspiciously, do not approach if you feel that it might put you at unnecessary risk. Instead observe any criminal activity at a safe distance and contact the police immediately giving as much information as possible. Encourage neighbours to do the same and always share information so that you are all aware of what has been happening and can be on the alert.

Always report incidents to the police at the time of the event, it is harder to act on delayed information and gives the police less chance of catching any offenders. When reporting incidents to the police, always obtain a log number this will be make it easier for you to collate and give you a point of reference should you or someone else need to ring back at a later time with additional information. Make all allotment holders aware of the local police number, or encourage them to use 999 in an emergency.

**Collective approach to security**

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Consider joining Neighbourhood Watch or setting up a scheme if there isn’t one in your area. If all the residents are working together to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and challenge suspicious people the chances of becoming a victim of crime is reduced dramatically.

Do you have the correct insurance cover for your shed and the items it contains, it is amazing how many people find out they are not covered or don’t have enough cover only after they have been a victim of crime. This can apply to your home as well as your garden shed or outhouse!

Police non emergency

101

(Emergency 999)