

GET SHEDUCATED!

Is your garden and shed secure?

The garden and its perimeter

Your garden should be your first line of defence against burglars. If someone can get into your back garden easily without attracting attention, it gives him/her more time to steal from you.

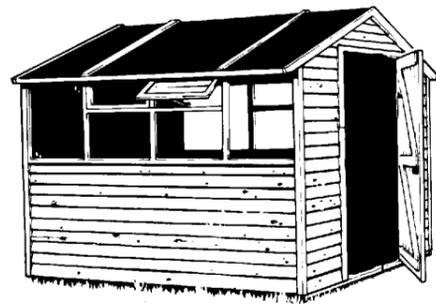
- Keep hedges and fences low at the front of the house so an intruder has nowhere to hide.
- Gravel on paths and driveways will alert you to someone approaching.
- Make sure your fences and gates are in good repair. Trellis fixed to the top of your garden fence and carefully-placed prickly plants will provide extra protection from intruders.
- If there is a gate at the side of your house which leads to the back garden, it should be as close to the front of your house as possible.
- Keep this gate securely locked. A simple bolt is not enough - use a good padlock.
- Install security lighting. Low energy dusk to dawn lighting is environmentally friendly, cheap to run and better for home security than passive infra-red activated lighting.
- Don't make a burglar's life easier by leaving tools around which can be used to force entry. Always lock them away securely after use and consider chaining them together with a padlock attached to a hasp and staple.
- Likewise, don't leave ladders lying around as these can be used by a burglar to reach other parts of your house. Ladders should be chained and padlocked to a strong post or wall.
- Try to avoid leaving things like dustbins lying around - they can also be used as a climbing aid
- Remote-movement detectors can protect costly garden furniture and valuable ornaments such as statues or stone planters. However, these are only suitable for heavy objects not affected by wind or casual vibration. Alternatively, you can anchor these items to the ground using ground anchors designed for this purpose - even valuable plants can be protected in this way.

- Hanging baskets are also worth protecting. Bending the bracket and/or hook so the basket cannot be removed may be enough to deter thieves, although locking brackets are also available for this purpose.

Sheds, garages and outbuildings

Garden sheds are a popular target with burglars as valuable items are often stored in them. Power tools, lawnmowers, cycles, golf clubs, etc., are all attractive to thieves and very expensive to replace.

- Has your shed survived the winter without any damage? If not, don't delay - fix it today!
- Shed doors are notoriously easy to break into, so strengthen the door and frame if you can. Outside door hinges should be secured with coach bolts or non-return screws. Use strong pad-bars and close-shackle padlocks.
- Up-and-over garage doors can be secured by putting padlocks through the inside runners or by fitting padlocks with a hasp and staple on either side of the door. Five-lever mortise locks are the best thing to use on normal solid doors.



- Are the windows secure? Does the glass need replacing? You could use perspex or polycarbonate sheet as a more secure alternative, as long as it is securely fixed. Use a window lock on any windows which can be opened, along with a strong grille or heavy wire mesh panel. Consider using net curtains so people can't see inside.
- Battery operated alarms may act as a deterrent. If you have a house alarm, you could have it upgraded to include your shed or garage. If the garage is an integral part of your house, make sure the alarm conforms to BS 4737.



Your property

You also need to protect everything you keep in your shed and garage.

- Does your insurance cover the shed and garage and all the equipment stored in them?
- Is everything postcoded so you could identify it if it was stolen?
- Items can be postcoded by a variety of methods (etching, branding, paint stencilling, etc.) Making them easy to identify will make it more difficult for a thief to dispose of them, so they are less likely to be stolen in the first place.
- Keep a record of serial numbers.
- Photograph valuable items and keep the photos somewhere safe.
- Make everything secure inside the shed, so even if someone did break in they wouldn't be able to walk away with all your valuable items.
- Chain cycles, mowers, ladders and tools to a strong anchor point, such as metal rings fixed in concrete to the floor, and use a close shackle padlock.
- Sheds are not really designed for safe storage, so it might be better to keep a strong lockable box or cage inside your shed. Better still, store valuable items in a more secure place.
- Ask your neighbours to keep an eye on your shed as well as the house and do the same for them in return.
- If your shed is screened from view, cut down some foliage so you're not providing cover for a thief.
- When you've made your garden, shed or outbuildings more secure, remember to lock things away every time. It only takes a minute to pick something up and walk off, so don't be tempted to leave everything outside while you go inside for a cup of tea. And NEVER leave cycles unlocked.

Natural protection

One of the best ways to keep thieves out of your back garden is to use nature's own defence mechanisms. A barrier of prickly hedge may be all the protection you need around your property. Here are some suggestions for plants to use. You can also ask for advice at your local garden centre.

- BARBERRY (Berberis)
- BLACKTHORN (Prunus Spinosa)
- BUCKTHORN (Rhamnus)
- FIRETHORN (Pyracantha)
- GORSE (Ulex Europaeus)
- HAWTHORN (Crataegus Monogyna)
- HEDGING ROSE (Rosa Rugosa)
- HOLLY (Ilex)
- MAHONIA JAPONICA
- ORNAMENTAL BRAMBLES (Rubus)
- QUINCE (Chaenomeles)
- ROSES - eg climbing and rambling roses, plus Rosa Pteracantha
- SEA BUCKTHORN (Hippophae Rhamnoides)



Neighbourhood Watch

And finally . . . are you a member of Neighbourhood Watch? If not, would you like to join a scheme, or perhaps even start one yourself?

For further information and advice please contact the crime reduction officer or problem solving officer at your local police station on 01268 532212.

