

GARDEN, GARAGE & SHED SECURITY TIPS

Most people use Spring as the time of year to start rummaging in their garden sheds, checking out the mower, the strimmer and other garden tools ready to tackle all those summer jobs ahead.

Beware, the thief also likes this time of the year to help relieve you of all those forthcoming gardening jobs by stealing your mower, strimmer, chain saw or any other items he might find of value. Some of his favourite items to steal are bicycles, motorbikes, mechanical and electrical garden machinery, expensive fishing tackle, toys. Your garages and sheds are the obvious places to look.

There is usually something he can also use to break into your house or your neighbours house whilst you and they are out at work. Spades, crowbars, hammers, screwdrivers and chisels left in an insecure shed or garage all save him the trouble of carrying an instrument around with him, increasing his likelihood of being caught. If you leave them out lying in the garden, it's even easier for him.

An unlocked side gate is a favourite and easy method for him to get into the rear of your property where he may be able to work unobserved. Fit a hasp and padlock to the gate. Make sure the gatepost is not rotten. Not only does it help prevent entry. It also makes it more difficult to depart with your garden equipment.

Don't make it easy for him (or maybe her for that matter !).

Chain and lock ladders if they are stored outside or easily accessible in a garage. If you rent or own a garage in a separate block, don't rely on the original lock. Consider fixing an additional hasp and padlock. Likewise if your garage door has a weak lock, consider fitting another, to reinforce your security. If it has one, make sure the side entrance door is sound and secure also.

Chain and padlock items in the shed or garage together. Trying to remove a mower and bike chained together is much more difficult. Even more so if the chain is also padlocked or secured to the concrete floor or other suitable immovable object.

Prevent unauthorised access to your garden shed by fitting a hasp and padlock. Make sure the fittings are reinforced on the inside of the shed so they cannot be pulled out especially if the wooden frame is weak. Use smooth headed coach bolts or burr the tops of screws so they cannot be undone.

Battery operated shed alarms are readily available and not expensive in comparison to the value of what might be stolen.

Prevent the thief from seeing inside. Covering shed windows with a curtain can act as a deterrent. What the thief can't see he may not be bothered with. If the risk is high, consider window grilles.

Check the state of your garden fences. Carry out repairs after the winter. Consider topping close boarded wooden fencing with trellis. Grow spiky or prickly plants such as climbing roses into it. It makes it more difficult to climb over.

Thorny plants planted in vulnerable border areas can also be a good deterrent but do not let them grow too high as they might provide concealment for an intruder.

Consider an outside security light which activates with movement (don't blind the neighbours with an excessively bright one) . A thickly laid gravel path will crunch under foot and act as a deterrent.

You can property mark expensive items with your post code and photograph difficult to describe objects to aid identification. (There are many ways of marking property . Die stamping, etching, using ultra violet marker, permanent marker, smart water or micro dots etc)

Mark your garden furniture to identify it. Be aware garden furniture can be a good aid for climbing.

Some garden plants can be very expensive and if in pots may be stolen. Consider securing vulnerable plants and exposed pots to the ground if located on the border of your property or exposed close to the road or footpath.

Check your household Insurance covers your shed, garage and garden out buildings. Remember the support your neighbours could give within a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

Keep an eye open for unusual activity and persons in your road. Report suspicious activity. Tasking a few small security precautions will give you peace of mind to enjoy your garden this summer.

Contact Sussex Police on 0845 607099 Ext 30301 for Crime Prevention Advice or '999' in an emergency To give anonymous information about Crime, contact Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111.