

Allotment Security



Introduction

There has been a spate of organised thefts and vandalism this year on at least three of our Allotment Sites. The collective cost of stolen equipment and damage runs into thousands of pounds. By way of example theft and damage at just two of our sites this year came to over £5000

Costs aside, the frustration, disappointment and anger of those impacted and the burden of dealing with the aftermath of such events is significant.

The intention of this guidance is to support our membership in reviewing security on their sites.

Theft of property from allotment sites and sheds is on the increase nationally. Thieves are now aware that householders are improving the security of their homes. The risks of burglary from an individual home is relatively high when compared to allotment sheds and buildings.

Allotments are potentially 'softer' targets with a lower risk profile and higher potential gains. Rewards for thieves are good. Property and machinery stored in allotment sheds and outbuildings can, in many cases, run into £1000's.

Detection rates are low as the thefts tend to occur at night and many of our sites are not overlooked or in more isolated locations. This makes them easy targets. Disposal of unmarked garden machinery at car boot sales either in or out of area is quick, simple and low risk.

The assumption in this document is that sites do not have mains electricity so illustrative examples of security equipment that require electricity are either solar or battery powered.

Vigilance

Thieves are likely to scope out allotment sites. Research from the Home Office indicates that, **for the majority of burglary, the intention to burgle is formulated well in advance**, so take note if you see strangers wandering about the allotment site or in close proximity to the perimeter or to the gate.

If you can find an opportunity to chat to them and have a conversation then this may be enough to convince the thief there's a chance of being identified if there is a break in. Only try this approach if there is more than one person making the approach and don't do so if you have any concerns or doubts about the nature of the individual.

If you see somebody who is acting suspiciously then call the police on 101 and notify your Committee as a matter of urgency. If you come across intruders then call the police on 999. **Don't put yourself at risk.**

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 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.

It is well worth your Committee getting to know your local policing team. They may be prepared to work with you on an Allotment Watch Scheme. Some Allotment Associations countrywide have established such schemes.



You can find out details of your local policing team here:

www.thamesvalley.police.uk/your-local-area/contact-your-local-team/

Consider joining the **Thames Valley Alert** scheme. This is a community system which provides two-way messaging and the exchange of information with Thames Valley Police, Neighbourhood Watch and other community groups. It takes 10 steps and about 2 minutes to complete the registration process here www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk



Sheds

Shed security is a real issue. The first and best piece of advice is that unless necessary **don't store valuable equipment in your shed.**

Organised thieves are not really interested in forks, spades, rakes, etc. They are looking for machinery - lawnmowers, brush cutters, hedge trimmers, chainsaws, rotovators, cultivators, etc. These items are easily disposed of at car boot sales.

If you only have hand tools in your shed there is a school of thought which believes that leaving the shed unlocked will prevent damage. Thieves will be able to gain entry without smashing doors, locks and windows and probably won't be interested in your hand tools.

However, for **opportunistic thieves**, making it more difficult to get into your shed may put them off and prevent them stealing from your shed.

Here are some tips for securing your shed:

- *The door, doorframe and walls should be sound. Damaged or rotten sections should be replaced.*
- *Use a **hasp and staple** fitting if possible. They are more secure.*



- *Where possible door hinges and 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. Coach bolts can be bought for 50p for a pack of 10 from www.toolstation.com*



- Alternatively, look at a higher security hasps and staple which can be bought for circa. The example below is from **Yale at £8.00**



Security Hasp

- Disable any externally visible screw heads.
- Use good quality **close shackle** padlocks as these cannot be easily levered or cut.
- Try to buy a padlock with a **CEN GRADE 3** – Medium to High Security. Such padlocks can be bought for about £13 (see below)

Some examples of padlocks and costs are thus:



Closed Shackle Padlock CEN 2 -Yale £9



Open Shackle Padlock CEN 3 – Arbus £9

- Big in the padlock world does not necessarily mean best. Buy quality locks from a manufacturer you recognise. Cheap padlocks will let you down. Choose **hardened or laminated** steel rather than stainless steel which is more brittle. Check the following web sites for more information and prices

www.safe.co.uk www.padlocks.co.uk www.lockshopdirect.co.uk

- Do you really need a window in your shed? - if not, board it over securely.
- If you do need a window then Perspex or polycarbonate sheet are better if fixed well – glass is easily broken.
- Where possible any opening windows should have key operated locks fitted if they need to be opened 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.

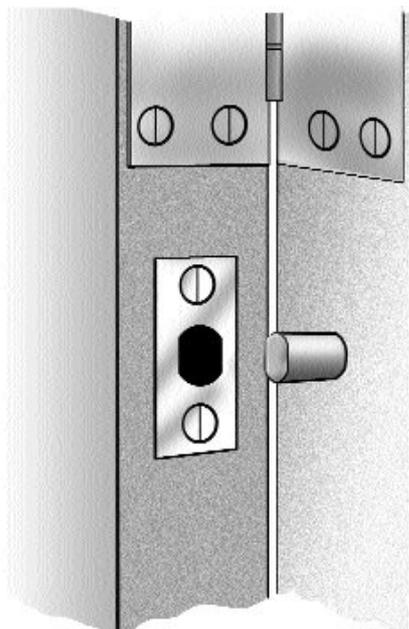
Door Hinges

One of the most vulnerable parts of a shed are the door hinges. Most shed doors have external hinges allowing the door to open 180° but these are easy to prise off, unscrew, or tamper with the hinge pin.



What are hinge bolts?

Hinge bolts. These are 'fit and forget' steel pins, sometimes called dog bolts that are fitted into the hinge side of a door leaf. As you close the door the pin, or bolt passes into a keep in the door frame.



These bolts are fitted in pairs with one about 150mm below the top door hinge and the second about 150mm above the bottom hinge. They should be fitted to all outward opening timber doors where the hinges are exposed and to inward opening doors that might be susceptible to kicking and barging.



*Security Hinge Bolts BZP Steel with
Fixing Screws (1 Pair)*
www.amazon.co.uk
£2.18

Fitting a hinge bolt

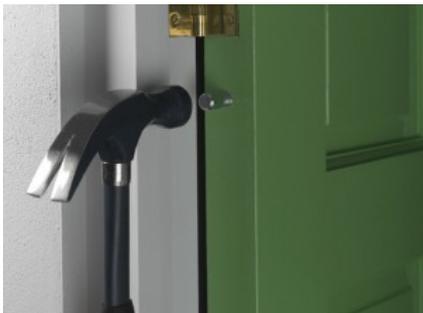
Hinge bolts are normally used in pairs with one slightly below the top hinge and another just above the bottom hinge.



1. Mark the bolt position in the centre of the hinged edge of the door.



2. Drill a hole at the mark to the depth, and using a drill bit, as specified by the manufacturer on their packaging.



3. Hammer the ribbed section of the bolt into the drilled hole, leaving the smooth domed section protruding from the door edge.



4. Gently 'close' the door allowing the bolt to make a small indent on the frame. Position and draw a line around the plate provided. Chisel out within the marked area to the plate depth. Drill out the central hole to accommodate the bolt.



5. Screw the plate in place and check that the door opens and closes smoothly. Repeat the process for any further hinge bolts required.

- Consider a battery operated shed alarm (see alarms section) available from DIY stores or local locksmiths. If your site is not overlooked, an alarm is a good deterrent with the intention of frightening off any would-be thief.

Securing Larger Items of Equipment

The best advice of all is **not to store large, valuable items of machinery in your shed.**

However, we recognise that this may not be possible so making it more difficult for thieves to remove larger items of machinery is very important.

Here are some tips:

- Inside the shed chain together any larger tools that have handles though their handles
- Large, heavy items such as lawn mowers or cultivators can be chained together. Use a heavy-duty chain and good padlock.
- Alternatively, you can chain individual items to a flagstone using a security ground anchor and heavy-duty chain and padlock.
- If you don't have a flagstone then consider filling a bucket with concrete. Use a masonry fixing then chain your machine to it.



Sterling Ground Anchor - £12.60
www.ironmongerydirect.co.uk



Target Security Chain 1 metre - £9.97
www.amazon.co.uk

Marking Machinery and Equipment

Property marking is important. It deters thieves and helps the police to return stolen property. It is a good idea for your site to advertise, in a prominent position, the fact you have marked all equipment and machinery on the site as this acts as a deterrent.

Here are some actions you can take:

- Note all serial numbers on your machinery and register them with Immobilise.com, the National property register. The site also sells Tamper Evident Hologram Stickers at circa £6.00 for 10 stickers that can be linked to your account. This will help the police identify stolen items and return your property. www.immobilise.com/

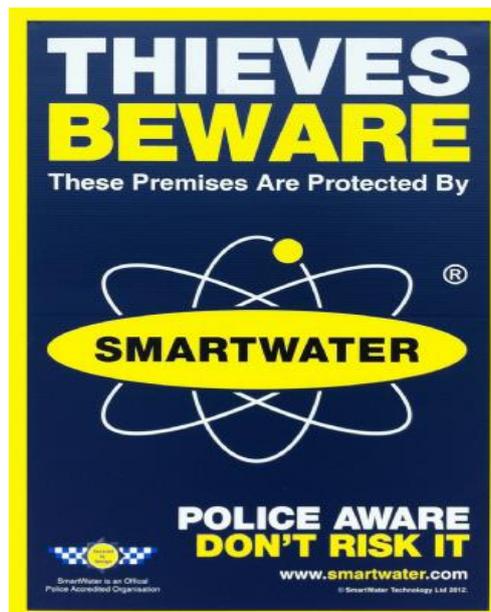
Etching

- Consider the following
 - Etch all significant items of equipment. Battery operated etching pens can be used. Once etched use paint to make the etching obvious. Use a term such as 'Stolen from OX2 6BS'
 - Battery operated etching pens can be bought relatively cheaply (circa £12) from Amazon.



www.amazon.co.uk/ Cost £12

- Consider using one of the following: Smartwater or SlectaDNA. These solutions can be used on any item and it's simple, quick and easy.



Of the two products SelectaDNA is the cheaper with a one-off cost of £49.00 which will cover about 50 items and includes signage. SmartWater

is more expensive with an annual fee of circa £50.00. Both offer registration on a database that can then be accessed in the event of theft.

There have been studies to evaluate effectiveness as a deterrent for residential burglary. See below:

1. *During the first six months of a pilot scheme in 2009 involving 100 households in a part of Kent, UK, police recorded a 94% reduction in burglary.*
2. *Another area that has used the 'SmartWater Strategy' is Nottingham in England, where 56,000 homes had their property marked with SmartWater and covert operations using SmartWater were instigated by the police. There has been a reported 40% reduction in burglary since the start of the initiative.*
3. *In 2012, SmartWater presented their strategy to officers of the Metropolitan Police, who decided to test SmartWater's concept under controlled conditions. Consequently, a 'proof of concept' trial was initiated in 2013. SmartWater operated in the London Borough of Brent and, following six months of formal assessment, announced an 85% reduction in household burglary.*

It appears that the use of a Smart Water or Selecta DNA could have a significant deterrent effect. It is worth talking to your local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme as some schemes can provide discounted products.

It may also be worth arranging a site day when members can have equipment etched and/or marked with Selecta DNA

Perimeter and Gate Security

For allotment sites that are fenced the following points be

- Regularly check all fencing to make sure it's in good condition. We recommend that your fence should be at least two meters high and form a solid barrier with no gaps
- Gates should always be securely locked and should ideally be a design that is difficult to climb
- Consider painting the top of the gate and fences, where possible, with anti-climb paint. It makes getting over the gate more difficult and leaves difficult to remove black marks on offenders' hands or clothing. **Use a warning notice.** It will act as a deterrent.



Anti-Climb Paint 1ltr
Screwfix.com - £12



Everbuild Anti-climb paint 1ltr
Amazon.co.uk - £11.50



Warning Signs
Amazon.co.uk - £1.50

- Check that there are no bins, composters, trees, overhanging limbs, or bushes that could be used to climb over the fence.
- Consider planting thorny bushes inside the fence and around the gate to deter entry. Thick wild blackberry bushes around the perimeter are also a deterrent and have the benefit of bearing fruit!
- Ladders should not be left in the open and preferably locked and chained.
- Padlocks on entrance gates should be high security locks with a CEN grading of at least 4 or preferably 5. If the gate is the main point of entry then it is worth spending money on a high security padlock.
- Abus and Abloy are the most respected manufacturers and produce an excellent range of open and closed shackle padlocks. The Abus "Rock" range is commonly regarded as the best CEN 4 lock on the market using the highest grade hardened steel.
- Security locks are not cheap but if the gate is your main point of entry it is well worth spending the money.
- Other manufacturers such as Yale, Master Lock and Squire produce good locks. High security locks are not cheap but these manufacturers may provide a secure, more cost-effective solution.
- Always check the dimensions of the padlocks, particularly the closed shackle padlocks. The diameter of the shackle and the shackle clearance are the measurements to check

High Security Padlocks



Abus Granit CEN 5
www.lockshop-warehouse.co.uk
 £79



Abloy 350 CEN 5
www.abloylocks.com/
 £91

- Ensure that members do not lend gate keys to non-members. You can use your Association Rules and insert a clause that revokes membership if this happens. This ensures members take stewardship of their main gate keys seriously.
- If you are changing padlock then it may be possible to cover the cost by either introducing or increasing your levy for key deposits

Alarms

You can buy battery operated shed alarms at a reasonable cost. The alarms work with PIR motion detectors and come with either a key pad or remote fobs.

There is normally a 10-20 second delay which enables you to disarm the detector before it goes off. They do make a loud noise of up to 130 decibels

- Try to fix the alarm in a less noticeable part of the shed
- The impact is much greater if a number of sheds are fitted with alarms. It is a greater deterrent if alarms go off sequentially as intruders enter sheds
- If your site is in close to houses there is an issue in that you may disturb the neighbours if there are regular false alarms
- **Fix a warning notice** in a prominent location either on the sheds or in a prominent location at the entrance to the site



Warning Signs - Amazon.co.uk - £0.99



PIR Shed Alarm - Amazon.co.uk - £5.99



PIR Shed Alarm – Sterling £16.93
www.toolstation.com



PIR Shed Alarm – Yale £17.94
www.homebase.co.uk

There are more sophisticated and expensive PIR, battery powered, alarms which may be worth considering for larger allotment buildings containing large machinery and or goods. These systems use GSM SIM cards to contact up to three individuals on their mobiles when the alarm is triggered.

The system illustrated below also has an external, solar powered siren that can be located up to 50 metres from the building and provides a double effect by triggering 30 seconds after the internal siren has sounded. The batteries last for 7 months assuming one arming and disarming per day and will send a text message when the batteries are low.



UltraPIR & Solar Siren (Battery Powered 2G GSM Wireless UltraPIR Alarm & Solar Wireless Siren). £95.99

www.ultrasecuredirect.com

The reason for considering alarms relates to a study of house burglary and offenders' decision making. The findings are noted below:

Main situational factors influencing decision to offend

Deterrents rated with high Percentage rating frequency as a deterrent*

- Presence of alarms outside property 84%
- Belief that house is occupied 84%
- Presence of CCTV/camera at property 82%

Deterrents rated with medium frequency

- Apparent strength of doors/window locks 55%

CCTV

The combination of alarms and CCTV is regarded as the most powerful deterrent.

Motion detection, solar powered CCTV is becoming increasingly available. They are not cheap. Two examples are shown below:



Wanscam® Wireless WiFi Solar & Battery
www.tomtop.com £147



Wireless WiFi Solar & Battery HW29-4G Solar Power
4G Mobile Camera Motion detection
www.3gmobilecctv.com £359

Please note this is a technical area and you will require either access to a network or a public, static SIM card with a fixed IP address. DO NOT consider purchasing until you have taken advice from an IT literate expert (hopefully a member of your Association). This is emerging technology.

A cheaper alternative may be to fix a **dummy solar CCTV camera**. The solar component powers a flashing LED which gives the illusion of an active camera. This won't provide images or evidence but may act as a deterrent if combined with prominent placed **CCTV monitoring warning notices** and possibly a PIR triggered, solar powered security light (see examples below):



Dummy Solar Powered CCTV Camera
Amazon.co.uk £8.96



CCTV Warning Notice – Rigid 3mm plastic

www.safetysignsupplies.co.uk £9.78



Solar Powered Security Light 1400 lumens
Amazon.co.uk £27.93

Points for consideration:

- All solar powered devices should face south
- Cameras and lights should be placed high and not be easily accessible by potential thieves
- Think about the range of the PIR and the light
- Don't locate lights where they might disturb neighbours
- You may need to replace rechargeable batteries so don't make it impossible to get to the equipment if necessary

Security Lighting on Allotments

Evidence for the efficacy of security lighting on allotments is contradictory. There is a school of thought which indicates that, on isolated sites, you are simply making it easier for thieves by providing a source of light at night.

In the research on how burglary offenders make decisions security lights did not arise as a deterrent factor.

The advice from security specialists is that security lighting is only really effective when combined with CCTV coverage. This heightens the risk in terms of offenders in feeling they might be identified.

Summary

There are low cost options which can enhance security in sheds and on your site. In larger Associations where valuable items or goods are stored there are also more expensive and sophisticated systems which offer greater protection.

With theft from allotments on the increase and allotment sites being regarded as low risk, higher return targets it is well worth reviewing site security and putting in place measures which will act as deterrents.

Remember 80% of burglaries are pre-planned so if you can place seeds of doubt in the minds of potential offenders they may just move on elsewhere.

A combination of action by individual plot holders and your Committee reviewing and putting in place sensible security measures is a good way forward. The starting point should be a measured consideration of security by all those involved.

We hope this document provides some helpful guidance and stimulus for discussion and action. Nobody wants to be the victim of theft !

Legal Disclaimer

Any crime reduction measures implemented should take full account of the following legislation:

- The Occupiers Liability Act 1984
- Building Regulations
- Fire Regulations
- Health and Safety
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Planning Law and Local Planning Governance
- Any other relevant legislation

While the advice contained within this booklet may reduce the risk of crime, there can be no guarantee that the measures implemented will prevent crime. The advice is given without the intention of creating a contract.

The authors of this document take no legal responsibility for any advice given.

Products shown in this document are for illustrative purposes only. The authors take no legal responsibility for any items purchased resulting from reading and/or acting on this document.