

Many people take a great deal of trouble securing their home and property. However, they'll happily leave valuable garden tools in a shed which is either unlocked or so old and run-down as to prove no obstacle whatsoever to thieves.

To make sure your shed is safe and secure, ask yourself the following questions:



Is the structure in good order?

Are there patches of rot or loose slats? If you have identified a problem, fix it now. Reinforce your shed from the inside to make it more resistant to a break-in. This can be done by fixing additional panels to the internal structure.



Are the doors secure?

Shed doors are notoriously easy to break open so strengthen the door or frame if you can. Outside door hinges should be secured with coach bolts or non-return screws. Use strong padbars and close shackle padlocks.



Are the windows secure?

Consider replacing a glass window with a Perspex or polycarbonate sheet. Use a solid window lock and fit a strong grille or heavy wire mesh. Putting up a net curtain can deter casual viewing.

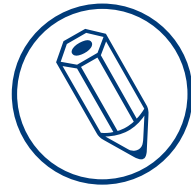


Does your shed have an alarm?

If not, many companies are now offering cost-effective battery powered alarms to use on sheds and outbuildings.

Your property

High burglary rates from sheds indicate that not only are they easy to break into but there is a large market for the stolen contents. With this in mind, consider if the property kept inside would be better stored elsewhere.



Mark your property

Mark valuable items with your house number and postcode using a UV pen or paint. If your property is stolen and it is marked there is a greater chance that you will get it back. You can also have your property engraved. Not only can property marking deter a thief from taking the items but it also acts as a way of tracing the owner should the goods be recovered by the police.



Insurance

Do not assume that your home insurance covers the contents of your shed; you need to check this with your insurance provider. Some items within the shed, such as bikes, may need to be insured separately.



Tools and ladders

Tools can be expensive items to replace. If these cannot be stored in a secure location then chain them together. Padlock the chain to an anchor point or place items in a toughened, lockable steel box secured to the ground. Make sure you keep a note of the contents along with serial numbers etc. You can do this by using the table overleaf.

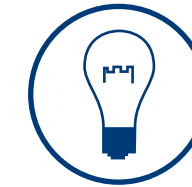


Bikes

If you are storing a bike within your shed make sure you use a decent 'D' lock and secure it to a solid anchor point.

The surrounding environment

By securing the environment around your home you can make it much harder for an intruder to break in.



Lighting

Lighting can be an effective crime prevention measure. If your shed is visible from your home, install lighting which can be triggered by movement sensors. If you are concerned that lights may be broken by vandals, secure a wire mesh casing or basket around them.



Protective planting

There is a range of prickly plants available which offer an attractive means of protecting your property. They act as both a visual deterrent and a physical barrier.



Shared shed/garage/allotment areas

Get to know who should have access to these areas. Challenge strangers by simply asking "Can I help you?" This is often enough to deter criminals. Keep a list of contact numbers for neighbouring sheds so if you find a property unsecured you can inform the owner. Consider starting up an allotment watch scheme.