

How Sheducated Are You?

The humble garden shed has increasingly become a happy hunting ground for thieves.

With security on houses upgraded, traditional burglars are actually opting for easy pickings at the end of the garden.

The shed, garage or outbuilding - tucked away from the house is often far easier to break into, and less likely to be alarmed. However it is an Aladdin's cave of swag and bounty for the thief. Many sheds these days carry more stock than a small hardware corner shop, with household and garden DIY power tools neatly arranged on shelves or stowed on purpose made brackets and clips.



From the villain's perspective such items are small, lightweight and easier to make off with than a TV, computer or mini hi-fi system. Although cheaper to buy than some household items they are expensive enough to buy new that they carry a healthy second hand value and can be quite sought after. Consequently they are quite easy to "fence".

From the police point of view there is a risk that shed breaks can go unreported and not investigated. The courts may take a less serious attitude to a shed burglary - after all there is no significant threat of violence or assault to a householder. The best ploy is to defend all your property from theft.

Sheds are notoriously easy to break into. A padlock (cheap or expensive), fitted on a flimsy clasp, held by a couple of tiny screws in a soft timber doorframe offers no real protection.

Windows are even less secure. Some thieves have been known to jemmy off a whole shed panel or roof to get inside. Once in, the tools are ready to hand and unlikely to be security marked.

The only real solution is to spend a little time considering what you can do. A better-designed or built shed is a good start. Then think about where the shed is sited. Consider having floodlighting illuminating that part of the garden and fitting mains or battery powered alarms. Firmly secure the shed door and windows and make sure the shed is anchored to the ground. It has been known for sheds to be lifted up and stowed and locked away. You may not be able to stop determined thieves from getting in but you can delay them getting their hands on your possessions - no thief wants to hang about longer than they have to.



What can you do?

- Put away all tools and equipment and lock up.
- Remember these tools could be used to break into your home. Don't leave ladders outside, or chain them up if you have to.
- Replace standard hinges with strap hinges secured by coach bolts or use security screws on existing hinges.
- Use good quality locks to secure your gates and doors.
- A tough pad bar (also called hasp and staple) fitted with a strong padlock and secured with coach bolts is the most effective way of securing a door.
- Some standard locks fitted to up-and-over garage doors are easily overcome. A padlock with a hasp and staple fitted on each side is very effective. Specialist locks for such doors are also available.
- Double garage doors with a rim latch should be supplemented with a mortice deadlock.
- If the garage is attached to the main building ensure that connecting doors are secure.
- Install outside security lighting operated by either movement sensor or photo electric cell (Dusk till Dawn light).
- Check that your household insurance covers theft from your garden and outbuildings.
- Mark your power tools etc with your postcode and house number or the first two letters of your house name. Alternatively, permanently mark them by scratching or painting: this will also reduce their value to the thief.
- Fit a battery operated alarm. These can cost less than you think.
- Fit a window grille and / or frosted window film to stop a thief seeing into your shed or garage.
- Chain tools, cycles and other valuable equipment together using high security chain or cable and a good quality padlock.
- Photograph valuable and unusual garden ornaments and keep these in a secure place.

SHEDUCATE

Secure the access to your shed or garage by *locking* gates and using thorny bushes next to walls and fences

Have you visibly *marked* the contents of your shed? Make a note of serial numbers and *photograph* valuable plants, ornaments, machinery and equipment

External security lights which are activated by movement are a useful *deterrent*

Doors and windows of sheds and outbuildings need securing. Use good quality security fittings such as padlocks and bolts. Metal grills or locks will help make windows less vulnerable

Use coach bolts or non-return screws to *secure* door hinges and locks

Chain cycles, mowers, ladders and tools to a ground anchor or similar device. Mark all valuable items with your postcode or highly visible paint

Alarms for sheds and outbuildings are inexpensive (under £20.00) and can be obtained from DIY shops, catalogue shops and builders merchants

Together we'll crack crime. Join a *Neighbourhood Watch scheme*.
Think about a metal shed! These are more resilient and only slightly more costly!

Examine your insurance policies. Check that your household policy covers you for theft from your garden and outbuildings

