

SAFER ALLOTMENTS

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE



Practical Information and Advice on Preventing Allotment Crime

Allotment Security Guide

Get Sheducated

Don't keep valuables in your shed

Not keeping valuables in your shed is the best way to avoid becoming a victim of theft from your allotment shed. We would strongly recommend that valuables are never left in an allotment shed.

This guide has been produced by the North Lincolnshire Safer Neighbourhoods Partnership to provide you with practical information and advice on how to improve the security of your allotment. Many security improvements are surprising straightforward and easy to complete for those who enjoy DIY.

While the advice in this booklet may reduce the risk of crime, there can be no guarantee that the measures implemented will prevent crime.

Safety Advice on Theft and Vandalism at Allotment Sites

Vandalism, theft, fly-tipping and intimidating intruders can be problems on Allotments. The following are some tips and advice to tackle the problems and help to make your plat/site and safe and welcoming place.

The top three ways to deter crime on your allotment site are:

Good community relations - evidence shows a that vandalism is rare on sites that have regular contact with people in the surrounding community.

A strong community on site - plot holders get to know each others movements and look out for each others plots.

A well occupied and tidy site - a high level of activity and people gardening on site deters intruders, also making it easier to identify who is misusing the site and why. A tidy site means kids are less likely to think they will get away with messing around and if there are fewer places to hide it will deter thieves and vandals.

Other tips

Thorny climbers are also good to grow over sheds, with the bonus if it is a fruit crop of using the space to grow food!

Don't leave material around that is easy to set fire to, eg. Piles of dry sticks and paraffin in sheds.

Sheds are not designed for secure storage. Do not leave valuables in them. Consider leaving the shed unlocked as often sheds are broken into but nothing taken and the damage to the shed is the major expense.

Security Fencing

Security measures such as fencing will help keep out the troublemakers. If they can't get in they cannot cause trouble. Even if they do get in, their escape route is made more difficult, which will add to the deterrent effect.



Security Lights

If mains power is available on a site, infra-red activated security lights will deter night time raiders, who don't want attention drawn to them. Care should be taken that the lights do not cause a nuisance to people in the locality. They will often be activated by a passing cat so alerting the neighbourhood at 4am to the presence of a tomcat is not going to make for good relations.

Security Cameras

Security cameras can offer a solution. Nowadays these are available in low-light models and infra-red with radio links to a computer that only records if movement is detected. Prominent signs warning of their presence would provide a deterrent effect. They do, to be truly effective, require somebody on the other end to call the police if necessary.

Hedges

A lower cost and ecologically more beneficial method is to plant a hedge by the boundary. Plants such as Hawthorn and Pyracantha have nasty thorns that will make getting in well nigh impossible.

Unfortunately these take up space, vegetables do not tend to do well under the rain shadow of a hedge and obviously takes years to grow to such a stage as to be effective. Once grown they will also require trimming to keep them in bounds. However, gardeners are used to doing things today for which the benefits will not be apparent for a number of years.

On the plus side they increase bio-diversity and provide food for birds, shelter for pest predators etc.

Young People on Site

Young people do not necessarily go to allotment sites to cause damage. They may be looking for somewhere to 'hang out', away from disapproving adult eyes and control. The vandalism occurs when people are messing around, egging each other on to prove themselves or where they have found a new spot out of the way to indulge in illegal activity!

Approaching young people with respect and familiarity is a powerful weapon against abuse.



Today's young people are the plot holders of the future, so inform them they are in the wrong place but suggest they should come back to the site when they are ready for gardening.

Since most of the trouble is likely to come from local children, possibly the best answer to reducing vandalism is to include children and the local community. If the local community is aware of an allotment site, considers it of value and has some sense of ownership then they are more likely to dissuade children from undertaking acts of vandalism against the allotment and to report unusual happenings on the site.

If the children themselves appreciate the allotment site and know the plot holders then they are less likely to want to cause trouble. Better still, if they actually have a plot themselves they will discourage their compatriots from causing trouble. Events such as open days and offering tours to the local community help in these aims. Donations of surplus produce or other services to a community will assist as well.

Plot holders should be aware and look out for the following things:

Look out for suspicious behaviour

Let the allotments officer know of any incidents of criminal or anti-social behaviour, including the time and day and appearance of the perpetrators. This can help if a number of similar things are reported.

Notify the local Policing Team on the non emergency number 101 of any crimes on site at the time of the occurrence. You will obtain an incident number each time and should report this to the Secretary so a picture of offences and trends can be identified.



Dealing with Suspicious Intruders

Do observe anyone that looks like they might be about to commit a crime, but do not approach an intruder if you feel that it might put you at unnecessary risk. Observe from a safe distance and record it, so that you are able to report this to the Police, if needed.

Theft

Theft, like vandalism, is usually carried out by a small number of people and happens in bouts. So act quickly if an incident occurs to ensure that the site is not an easy target for theft. The National Allotments Regeneration Initiative recommends the following:

Sheds are not designed for secure storage. Do not leave valuables in them. Consider leaving the shed unlocked as often sheds are broken into but nothing taken and the damage to the shed is the major expense.

Conceal tools. Possible hiding places include: under the shed floor, in a built-in 'secret compartment' in a bin liner in the long grass or under a cardboard sheet / black polythene. Alternate where tools are hidden.

Use old tools or deface new ones to reduce their resale value. Painting all tools pink is remarkably effective.

Encourage plot holders to etch or mark the site postcode on all tools; if you get a spate of thefts you may be able to trace them to a specific car boot sale and notify the Police.

If you must store valuable items in a shed, store them in a strong, lockable box chained to something immovable.

If you must lock your shed use non return screws on all hinges, coach bolts or strong pad-bars and closed shackle padlocks. BUT bear in mind that, in the case of a wooden shed, the thief can just saw a hole or smash a window. Attach bars to windows of sheds to make them more secure. If smashed these can not then be used as a point of entry.

Keep a note of serial numbers of power tools and photograph valuable items.

Seven easy steps to make your Allotment shed more secure and help prevent loss of valuable items.

1. Store items away from allotments

If possible remove all valuable items from your allotment shed. Store them at home and try not to leave them at the allotment. This is a simple but effective way of preventing loss of valuables from your allotment shed.

2. Fit a hasp-and-staple

A hasp and staple can be fitted to most wooden sheds and is an inexpensive way to secure your shed. Used in conjunction with coach bolts (see tip no.3) and a closed shackle padlock, this could prevent the hasp and staple being levered off or the padlock being cut off.

Hasp & Staple



Closed Shackle



Open Shackle



3. Replace screws with coach bolts

The screws used on both the hinge and lock sides of the shed allow a burglar with a screwdriver to remove the hinges in seconds or lever off the lock. By replacing screws with coach bolts (mushroom-headed bolts) and installing a wide washer as illustrated below both these weaknesses could be reduced.



4. Board up windows

Weakly fitted single glazed windows provide easy points of access. These windows should be boarded up with a solid wire mesh grill, secured in place with coach bolts.

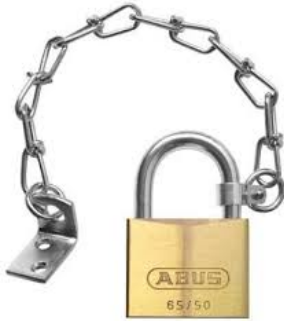
5. Replace or repair damaged or weak shed panels

Care should be taken to repair or reinforce any sections of shed panels which are loose, warped or rotten.

6. Chain garden tools together and use an anchor point

Upgrading the security of a wooden shed in line with the above recommendations will not prevent a motivated burglar from eventually gaining entry. For this reason it would be wise to reduce the ease at which burglars can remove items. Consideration should be given to chaining garden tools together using a chain and closed shackle lock as specified in Tip No.2. The items could be further secured with the use of a ground anchor. Ideally this would be fixed

into a concrete base dug under the wooden floorboards of the shed. Less desirable. But easier to install, would be the addition of a heavy paving slab positioned inside the shed onto which an anchor point could be added.



7. Property mark tools with your postcode and house number

If you have to leave any tools in your allotment shed it is advisable that you property mark them for extra security. Most tools that are taken are re-sold, property marking with your postcode and house number will link the handlers back to the burglary. This will also allow the recovered items to be returned to their rightful owners.

Alternatively you could use a forensic property marking system. This is a marking system that allows you to add an invisible identity mark. Each solution contains a unique code which is registered to a single address. The marking shows up under UV light and the Police actively look for items marked with this solution. If property is identified it can be returned to the registered owner. In order to maintain a clear evidence trail it is important that people do not share this product.



Log your property on a free website called IMMOBILISE if it is stolen you can indicate this on the website and the details of your stolen goods will then be visible to the police so when they recover goods it makes it easier to return them to their owners.

Hinges Explained

Strap hinges

The basic shed door hinge is the T or strap hinge. However the screw heads are easily accessible on the outside, so if anyone is determined to get in they can just take the screws out and lift the door off. Security can be improved by using clutch head or star drive screws.



Security hinges

An improvement on the basic strap hinge is the security hinge. This has larger holes to accommodate dome headed bolts. The bolts fasten through the door ledger on one side and into the door frame on the other. This is the most secure way to attach the hinges of an unframed door.



Concealed hinges

The next step up in security is to use a fully framed door. By using concealed hinges the problem of being able to undo the screws or bolts is overcome.



Useful Contact Numbers

Crimestoppers

0800 555 111

www.crimestoppers-uk.org



Humberside Police

101

www.humberside.police.uk



North Lincolnshire Council - Allotment Officer

01724 297845

www.northlincs.gov.uk



North Lincolnshire Safer Neighbourhoods Partnership

01724 244643

www.saferneighbourhoods.net



North Lincolnshire