



ALLOTMENT CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE



Allotments are often located in out of the way places and can be subject to both theft, damage, and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). You can reduce the risk of allotment crime by making sure you considered the below advice and implement the most cost-effective measures which are proportionate for the allotment holders and overall site. Not all measures may be suitable for your site.

Consider introducing an Allotment Watch - further advice can be obtained from your police Essex Watch Liaison Officer. Email: essex.watch.liaison.officers@essex.police.uk

Perimeter Protection

- If you have neighbours overlooking the site, cultivate a friendship with them and provide them with contact details for the site should anything happen. Encourage them to report suspicious incidents direct to the Police.
- Fencing should be in good condition, open railed/welded mesh 2m high with no gaps
- Consider planting thorny shrubs inside the fence line at low level to deter climbing but remember they may shade nearby planting and will need maintenance. If chosen carefully a crop may also be obtained from them.
- Gates should be securely locked out of hours and have anti-climb features
- Fit good quality mortise locks to BS 3261 standard or closed shackle Sold Secure police approved padlocks and hasps.
- Check that there are no bins, composters, trees or bushes that can be used for climbing over the fence or gate.
- Vehicle access should be controlled to prevent fly-tipping e.g. gate, collapsible bollards etc.

Lighting

- Good levels of lighting are advised if allotments have a level of surveillance from members of the public i.e. walkways, adjacent properties and main roads and if an electricity supply is available.
- Do not provide lighting where the allotment is not overlooked as this will only assist the thieves.

Alarms and CCTV

- Consider the use of alarms and CCTV to protect sheds and site storage facilities.
- If shed alarms are in use, consider nuisance value to adjacent properties and have recognised procedures in place should the alarms be activated.
- If secluded, and without electricity, consider battery operated GPS alarms and cameras are available that will send a message or photos to smart phones.
- If there is no electricity on site, consider the cost and maintenance of using battery power
- Consider the lighting needs for any CCTV system and check on the clarity in poor light before purchasing.
- If fitting CCTV to areas in the allotment warning signs need to be placed on the perimeter.



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Signs

- Install clearly visible, weatherproof signs alerting passers-by to the opening hours, rules, contact details of the allotment provider, all property on site is security marked, any CCTV cameras and how to report a crime.
- If you are a member of Neighbourhood Watch or Allotment Watch install a Watch sign.

General

Younger people love meeting places and dens, and allotments sites by their relative isolation, are sometimes attractive venues for them to meet up and enjoy themselves. Unfortunately, during the course of their use, damage can be caused by fire, graffiti and general larking about.

- Keep plots neat and tidy and don't leave anything outside that can encourage younger people to stay or cause damage e.g. seating.
- Items such as chairs and barbecues should be made identifiable and locked away if they are not going to be taken home.
- Ensure unused plots remain neat and tidy. It is proven that a cared for environment is less likely to suffer damage than an unkempt one.

Maintenance (tenancy agreements)

- A well-maintained site is less likely to attract vandalism and ASB
- Are tenancies regularly reviewed regarding maintaining shed security and upkeep etc?
- What enforcement actions are available to the Allotment Committee? Consider using them.
- Is adequate information provided about what is expected of allotment holders regarding their responsibilities, especially when witnessing or subject of crime or disorder?

Sheds

Consider what is being kept in any shed and what needs to be proportionate for keeping it safe. A wooden shed by its nature is not as robust as a metal shipping container, but a minimum level of security is required to deter ASB and vandalism rather than theft.

- **Avoid leaving any tools and equipment on site.**
- Sheds should be kept in good condition and be located in a visible position where possible.
- Protect hinges with tamper-proof screws and bolts, reinforcing where practical the inside of the door and frame at the hinge and locking areas.
- Consider good quality mortise locks to BS 3261 standard or closed shackle Sold Secure police approved padlocks and hasps. These should be fitted approximately a quarter of the way down from the top and similarly from the bottom. As stated, reinforce the mounting on the inside of the door.
- Consider 'shed bars' across the door to prevent access.



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- Consider whether you really do need a window as it is another way in for thieves. Board it over if not required.
- Make sure you lock windows and either paint over or cover the glass to avoid people looking in to see what you have to steal.
- Consider replacing the glass with stronger laminated glass or Perspex to make it harder to break. Wire mesh can also be used on the inside to improve overall security.
- Consider lining floors and walls with plywood sheeting to make it stronger and more resistant to attack
- Fix chains/anchor points to walls/floor to secure heavy/valuable items and tools. If no heavy items are available to chain tools to, fill a bucket with concrete and embed masonry chain
- Overtly mark your property (both electrical and manual tools) with your postcode and house number so that marking is permanent, and property is less attractive for a thief to sell. Also note any serial numbers and take photos of your property to help the Police identify your property or to help with any potential insurance claim. An all-encompassing vivid background colour could be used on all tools at the site to signify that they were used at your particular allotment site.
- Products such as forensic markers, may also help you to recover your stolen property but needs the accompanying signage to be an effective deterrent. The items can then be registered with the product company.
- Consider setting up an 'asset register' for the whole allotment scheme with a designated 'recorder' responsible for maintaining the record and registering valuables
- Consider investing in one large secure metal alarmed container for the storage of valuable items for all allotments, however with the advent of battery powered grinders and cutters ensure the locking mechanism is adequately protected. (See Alarms and CCTV).
- Consider planting thorny shrubs around the shed or metal container for added protection to the sides.
- Consider holding regular property marking days.

Greenhouses

- These are particularly vulnerable to theft and damage so UV resistant plastic alternatives to glass are probably more damage resistant and safer in the long run.

Allotment Shops

- Consider property marking your stock
- Carry out regular stock takes
- Cash should never be left on the premises
- Display that the till or money drawer is empty
- Consider security of the fabric of building including the roof of the shop as a possible entry point



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Crime prevention products

- Approved security products that have been tested to a minimum standard will improve the security of your shed or outbuilding and can be found at www.soldsecure.com or www.securedbydesign.com. Look for their logos.



REPORTING INCIDENTS TO ESSEX POLICE

- **DO NOT PUT YOURSELF AT RISK FROM HARM**
- **For crimes in progress now or if life is in danger, always call 999**
- For all non-urgent incidents and suspicious activity call 101 or report online at essex.police.uk
- Alternatively call Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111** or online at crimestoppers-uk.org

What do police need when reporting an incident?

- ✓ Report the incident as soon as possible
- ✓ Include information such as incident location, with landmarks or phone's GPS location for rural areas. (Essex Police also now have the capability of recording locations from the What3words app)
- ✓ Provide as much detail as possible about what you have seen and heard, such as descriptions of persons seen, vehicles (including make, model, colour, registration, direction of travel).
- ✓ Any dash cam footage or photographic evidence

All incidents however small should be reported, so that the agencies involved in Crime and Disorder Reduction are aware of the full scale of any problems being experienced on the allotments.

Other Useful Websites

<https://www.essex.police.uk> - a wealth of advice on different subjects.

<http://www.locksmiths.co.uk/> - Master Locksmith Association accredited locksmiths.

<https://www.nsi.org.uk/> National Security Inspectorate and <https://ssaib.org/> Security Systems and Alarms Inspectorate – Intruder alarm and CCTV accredited supplier and installers.

<https://thecrimepreventionwebsite.com/> - A good nationwide independent webpage run by a retired Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Officer. Crime prevention articles by Essex Police Crime Prevention Tactical Advisors are frequently published here under the "News" heading.

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