

## The Oasis Centre - Cornwall

Registered Charity Number 1139355, founded to serve the communities in the parishes of St Columb Major, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, St Eval and St Ervan



### Looking Out for ..... Garden Sheds

Number 21 in a series of notes on important issues.

Garden sheds and all the many bits and pieces we keep in them are perhaps not always at the front of our minds when we think about security. Criminals know this and are aware that our sheds may contain a treasure trove of portable items that will sell well at a car boot sale or on E-Bay. They also know that our sheds are likely to contain garden tools to help them to break into our houses. Ladders will give them access to upper windows and a sturdy spade is a useful tool for levering open external sliding doors, even those with security bolts.

Starting with the construction of our sheds, police advise that all screws accessible from the outside should have the grooves or slots on the top ground away to prevent them being unscrewed or they should be replaced with clutch head screws that require a special tool that a criminal is less likely to carry. Alternatively (and this may be the best solution), the screws should be removed, their holes drilled through and the screws replaced with round headed coach bolts, fixed with nuts inside the shed. Put wire mesh over any windows.

When it comes to securing the shed door, the first consideration is the strength of the door itself. The strongest hasp and padlock will be useless if it can be wrenched out of a flimsy door in seconds. It is worth bearing in mind that, if time and the noise involved are not serious considerations, a really determined thief will manage to break into almost any shed. This brings us to the next consideration. An infra-red, battery powered shed alarm is inexpensive. It needs no power connection and can be set and turned off using a fob. These alarms are very loud.

Moving on to the contents of our sheds, bicycles can often be found there. They are expensive items and it pays always to keep a record of your bicycle's colour(s), make, model and frame number. The latter can be found underneath the frame between the pedals. Also, take a photo. Then, when you leave it anywhere, make sure you have a really strong bicycle lock to secure it to something strong. Do this when you leave it in the shed. Some bicycle locks have built-in alarms activated by movement.

Bicycle locks are also useful for securing ladders and other valuable items. Their theft will involve the criminal in extra time and trouble, particularly if anchor points are fitted to the floor. Tools themselves should be marked with your postcode and house name / number. Ideally, use a silver or white felt tip marker and then spray a little varnish over the top. It is possible to buy a marker specifically made for the job. If large items like mowers are painted with flowers or designs in bright colours, they become very distinctive and unsaleable, thus unattractive to thieves.

By the way, if you register valuables on [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com), a national database, police can check against items that have been found or recovered from criminals.

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