



## Security and protective gardening

*by Peter Davies*

Most burglars look for easy ways of getting into a house and two-thirds of them gain entry via the back garden. By taking a few simple precautions you can reduce the risk.

### Windows

#### Sash Windows

To secure, install a key operated lock or drill a hole slightly downward through a top corner of the bottom window into the bottom of the top window, placing a solid pin or nail into the hole to prevent the window from being opened.

#### Louvre Windows

These are difficult to burglar-proof as individual panes of glass are easily removed though applying two-part epoxy resin to each pane of glass helps to prevent this. Ideally replace with solid glass.



#### Casement Windows

Use key locks and keyed the same for all windows. Basement windows are especially vulnerable, protect with grates or grilles but allow for opening in an emergency. Also, prune plants that hide windows and cut back branches that could help thieves climb through them. Store ladders in a locked garage or shed and not outside allowing

easy access to a first-floor window.

### Doors

#### Exterior Doors

Use quality locks for all entry doors which should be constructed of solid 1 3/4" thick hardwood, or be metal-clad. For added security use hinge bolts and strong hinges with non-removable or hidden pins. Install a wide-angle viewer and stout door chain. Use double-cylinder deadbolts which when double-locked need a key to unlock on BOTH sides so if glass is broken, burglars cannot gain entry by reaching in, and even if they enter your home through a window, they



cannot remove property through the doors. Make sure your house number - five inches minimum - is clearly mounted on a high contrast background and is easily read from the road at night. Emergency vehicles need to find your home in case of an emergency.

### **Double Doors**

Flush bolts installed at the top and bottom of the inactive door of a pair of doors offer additional security as an intruder cannot get at these devices to tamper with them if the doors are locked.

### **Sliding Doors (and windows)**

Sliding glass doors can be an easy point of entry. To improve security install keyed locking devices that secure the doors to the frame or track, adjusting the track clearances on the doors so they cannot be pushed out of their tracks and placing a strong metal or wooden bar along the track to prevent the doors from being opened.

### **Perimeter**



It is important to have some form of boundary marker providing a threshold which unauthorised visitors have to cross and the front of your home should be in full view of neighbours and passing pedestrians. Keep fencing, brickwork and planting low, so that anyone acting suspiciously can be seen.

Plants and shrubs should ideally be kept to around four feet in height and the lower canopy on trees at least eight feet from the ground. However, most burglars enter through secluded rear or side windows and doors, so prevent access to this area.

### **Fencing**

The minimum for protection is 6ft high closeboard, topped by trellis as it is fairly frail and will not allow a firm handhold.

### **Walls**

A rear wall should be at least 6ft high with non-setting anti-climb paint applied to the top. Gates - To guard the side and rear of your home, install a quality lockable wrought iron or steel gate that cannot easily be climbed. Mortice locks, padlocking bolts, hasp and staple or hardened steel chain and close shackle padlocking arrangements are effective. The garden is your first line of defence. Consider barrier planting to deter unwanted visitors; as well as planting on boundaries, plant around drainpipes and beneath ground floor windows making forced entry more difficult. Some plant suggestions follow (AGM = award of garden merit):

## Hedges

Berberis - forms a dense deciduous or evergreen shrub with spines along the branches and sometimes has spiny leaves as well. Prefers sun and thrives in dry conditions. *B. julianae* - evergreen shrub with yellow flowers in spring. Up to 6ft high. *B. x ottawensis* 'Superba' AGM - deciduous with beautiful purple foliage and yellow flowers in spring. Up to 6ft high. *B. x stenophylla* AGM - evergreen with masses of yellow flowers in spring. Up to 8ft high. *B. thunbergii atropurpurea* - deciduous purple foliage. Up to 5ft high.

Chaenomeles - These shrubs are spined to some extent and have a flowering period from March to May. *C. x superba* 'Pink Lady' AGM is a fast growing deciduous shrub with pink flowers in spring & yellow quinces in autumn. Can be trained against a wall.

*Crataegus monogyna* - Hawthorn - Fast growing impenetrable thorny hedge, with fragrant white flowers in May/June and red haws in autumn. *C. laevigata* 'Paul's Scarlet' AGM is popular for its double red flowers.

*Hippophae rhamnoides* AGM - Sea Buckthorn grows in any soil providing superb cover up to 10ft and is wind resistant with silver foliage in summer followed by yellow berries, and excellent thorns,. Plant in groups to obtain berries.



*Ilex aquifolium* AGM - Common Holly (left) - Large evergreen shrub, dark green spiky leaves can be clipped to maintain a formal hedge which forms an excellent windbreak, or grown as a specimen on its own. Large red berries on female plants only. Any well drained soil.

*Mahonia japonica* AGM - fragrant, yellow flowers in winter and spring, spiny leaflets for vandal-proof shade

tolerant hedge 4-6ft high.

*Osmanthus heterophyllus* - plant as a hedge or clip formally, otherwise it will reach 10-20ft. *Phyllostachys aurea* AGM - Golden Bamboo - Hardy, very graceful, forming thick clumps 10-15ft high. Less invasive than other bamboos.

*Poncirus trifoliata* - the hardy orange is a deciduous stout spined shrub up to 15ft high with single white flowers in April/May.

*Prunus spinosa* - Blackthorn or Sloe is a native shrub up to 12ft high of dense growth and long thorns which produces white flowers in April/May followed later in the year by bluish-black fruits used to flavour gin (freeze and thaw the fruits before steeping in gin and sugar for three months).

*Pyracantha* 'Orange Glow' AGM - Thorny stems, white flowers in May/June, followed by bright orange-red berries into winter. Suitable for north or east-facing wall or as impenetrable hedging, height 10-15ft.

*Pyracantha* 'Golden Charmer' - Vigorous evergreen shrub ideal on a wall, white flowers in May, followed by orange-red fruits. Height & spread 10ft.

*Ribes speciosum* AGM - Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry, spiny, produces greenish to greenish-pink flowers in clusters of two or three. Extremely hardy, thrives in moist, heavy clay soil in cool, humid climate.



*Rosa* - wide variety of forms. All roses form a dense framework of thorny branches but particularly *R. rugosa*. Grow through trellis at the top of a fence. *R. rugosa* - Fragrant old fashioned rose forming dense thickets and excellent hedges up to 6ft high. 'Rubra' AGM - crimson & 'Alba' AGM - white perpetual flowers followed by red hips. *R. xanthina* 'Canarybird' AGM - yellow saucer flowers, large stamens and prickly stems. *R. 'Fru Dagmar Hastrup'* AGM - excellent ground cover with very thorny stems 3ft high by 4ft spread, pale pink flowers May to September. *R. 'Blanche Double de Coubert'* AGM - fragrant old fashioned white rose - densely prickly for hedges or individual shrubs up to 6ft high.

*Ulex europaeus* 'Flore Pleno' AGM - Gorse - shrub 3-6ft with green stems and yellow double flowers April/May, viciously spiny. Likes full sun.

## Lighting

One of the best and most cost-effective deterrents to burglary. Install floodlights at opposite corners under eaves so the bulbs cannot be removed, to illuminate the walls and eliminate hiding places. Install passive infra-red (PIR) sensor exterior lighting near all points of entry to help identify night time visitors, but to give a sudden burst of light, to alarm a potential thief. Timers or photoelectric cells can automatically turn on the lights at dusk and off at dawn. Trim plants that would conceal activity near entrances and light dark corners where thieves could hide. The rear garden is more private than the front and PIR



switched halogen units, located out of reach to prevent tampering, are a strong deterrent to intruders. When not at home, light timers are useful for giving an impression that the house is occupied. Operate lights in several rooms and use logical lighting patterns. Some light timers offer random settings that are useful for lights in kitchens and bathrooms. If you are away for several weeks, have the post office hold your mail, stop newspaper deliveries, and ask a neighbour to watch your home and place a full dustbin out on collection day. Arrange for lawn care. Never leave messages on answering machines indicating that you are away.

## Alarms

If you continually set off false alarms, your neighbours and the police may not respond. A highly visible bell box with a stroboscopic light fitting can act as a powerful deterrent to the thief.

## Garden Sheds

Many people keep tools in their shed such as spades which can be used to force entry to your home. Everything of value should be chained and padlocked to each other or ground anchors. A suitable hasp, staple and padlock should be fitted to the door and frame. Hinges are usually exposed, so fit non-return screws to prevent their removal. The windows should also be screened with curtains and locked.

## Garages



Detached garages, like sheds, may provide tools to help a thief obtain entry to your home and side doors should be fitted with a mortice lock to BS 3621. Double opening wooden doors should have a high security close shackle padlock and padbar; up and over aluminium doors specialist mortice locks and padlocking bolts or hardened steel hasp and staple. Close shackle padlocks are

recommended to secure both sides of the door and sliding hasps can also be used on the inside to prevent the lifting of the opposite side and crawling in under the door. Thieves do not want to risk being seen and doors leading from attached garages could allow them concealed access into your home. Up and over doors can be secured from the inside by drilling holes into the two channels immediately above the runner wheels when the door is in the closed position. Padlocks inserted through the holes prevent the door being opened from the outside. The connecting door to the house should be fitted with a mortice lock to BS 3621. Mortice bolts should be fitted a foot from the top and bottom of the door. As with sheds, windows should be screened and locked.

## Trees

(Use where they could otherwise assist entry over a boundary or to access first floor windows)

*Aralia spinosa* - very spiny upright suckering shrub or tree up to 30ft. Umbels of white flowers in conical, terminal panicles followed by black fruit.

*Crataegus persimilis* 'Prunifolia' AGM - a medium sized hawthorn about 20ft high with a rounded crown, white flowers in June followed by bright crimson berries. 3" long deep green leaves turn orange and red in autumn.

*Elaeagnus angustifolia* AGM - Oleaster - small hardy, wind resistant deciduous tree, 15ft high, useful as windbreak. The smooth branches often bear spines and the narrow, light green leaves are silvery underneath. Fragrant yellowish white flowers followed by silvery-scaly sweet edible fruits.

*Gleditsia triacanthos* - Honey Locust or Three-thorned Acacia. Large tree carrying exceptional spines. Care when purchasing as most varieties of triacanthos are thornless.



*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Wiltonii' AGM - Creeping Juniper - excellent ground cover, thorny stem and foliage.

*Picea abies* 'Cupressina' - Pencil Christmas Tree - Medium-sized tree of columnar habit, with ascending spiky branches. Attractive form with dense growth. Avoid dry chalky soils.

*Picea pungens* 'Globosa' AGM - Blue Spruce - Rigid branches\_

irregular dense blue, spiky needles. Height 4-5ft high by 3ft spread. Slow growing. Likes a moist but well-drained rich soil. *Picea pungens* 'Hoopsii' AGM - Small to medium-sized tree. spiky needled stem, densely conical habit, with vividly glaucous blue leaves. Likes a moist but well-drained rich soil.

*Pinus mugo* ssp. *mugo* - Mountain Pine - very hardy, dense habit up to 11ft high by 15ft spread, long sharp needles.

*Robinia pseudoacacia* AGM - mature tree 70-80lt carries a very deeply ridged bark and the younger growth is armed with thorns.