

Barnet Allotment Federation

SECURITY MEASURES AT ALLOTMENT SITES

At the Federation's September 2010 meeting, we discussed how we might take a set of security measures across all our allotment sites to protect allotment machinery from theft. The aim of the measures would be to deter thieves from stealing machinery in the first place and to make the kit more difficult to sell if they did pinch it. If we all take the same measures, we can brief the police and the local press about what we are doing – adding to the deterrent effect.

The measures we settled on were as follows:

- to paint machinery an outrageous colour (say, fluorescent pink) taking care to get the paint into the inaccessible areas where it would be difficult for thieves to re-paint;
- to stamp on a prominent metal part (or melt into a plastic part with a heated punch) the words "Stolen from Barnet XX allot" where XX is the initials of your site e.g. LS for Lawrence Street. The secretariat has a set of letter and number punches and a mains-powered engraving tool which sites can borrow. Please ask if you want this kit;
- spraying parts of machinery with SmartWater. This is a paint colour-coded like a DNA fingerprint so that the SmartWater you spray on can be analysed to show where the protected machine came from. A simple kit with the analysis service costs from £35 per year and comes with lots of warning notices to stick on your gates, sheds, machines etc. SmartWater are at www.smartwater.tv – the website has a lot of blurb but click on "To Order" and you can choose from small kits for residents or larger ones for businesses – or you can phone 0800 521 669 or write to SmartWater Technology Ltd, PO Box 136, Telford, Shropshire, TF3 3WY.

To reinforce the security of your sheds etc:

- use close shackle padlocks which have a very short loop going through the hasp. This offers the thief very little space to get at the shackle with bolt cutters;
- use padlocks with a shackle at least 16mm in diameter. A lot of bolt cutters won't get a grip on such a thick shackle so easily.

To deter thieves from getting into the site at all you could try:

- growing a hedge of holly, firethorn or other prickly shrubs just inside the fence or training brambles up it. But remember you may have to strip them off if the fence needs repairing;
- spraying the fence with a foul-smelling liquid such as diluted animal urine or the juice made by soaking manure in water.

In the end, a burglar alarm may be the best deterrent. If your site doesn't have mains electricity, you could get a solar power kit – such as those available from PowerBee Solar at www.powerbee.co.uk or tel: 0845 094 8821. Most kits deliver a 12 volt supply which could enable you to use burglar alarm kit designed for retro-fitting to cars, but some solar power outfits also come with an inverter delivering a modest supply at mains 240 volts for household alarms etc.