



I have been living alone for quite some time now and had done some research on security landscaping, which I implemented for my current urban home way back in the day. Now I am planning to retire and re-locate to a rural area soonest. Add to this what I have experienced here in the city and my memories of my grandparent's farm, not to mention me currently battling squirrels, chipmunks and scoundrels, while my rural friend's battle deer, elk, moose and bear - I felt this subject warranted new research. After all I want not only myself, my family and friends, but my home, its contents, my animals and garden to be safe from four and two legged uninvited guests too. I at least want enough time to arm myself if need be.

*"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his house,
his possessions are safe."
Luke 11:21*

So I decided to re-research this subject from the rural and older age perspective and I thought I would share what I have learned. I not only searched the web from landscaping to law enforcement to homesteading sites, I also talked to my area professional landscapers, law enforcement, friends and neighbors. Believe it or not, even Homeland Security has something on this subject. Go figure. Then I talked with my friends in Maine, upper Michigan, Tennessee, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Texas, Oregon and Arizona. Most of who are living the rural, if not "boonies" lifestyle.



I found one FBI statistic that stated that there is a home burglary every 15.4 seconds somewhere in the United States. Most burglaries occur during the day, when occupants are away. Most occur during July and August, with the fewest in February. Most burglars are young males, under 25 years old, looking for small items easily converted into cash. About 70% of burglars use some force to enter a building, but open doors and windows are of course preferred.

Intruders also look for no to few obstacles blocking quick exits, and public access on at least one side of a property fence. Homes next to schools, along drainage ditches, and near parks or similar venues are among the most vulnerable.

To avoid getting caught, the intruder's ideal home is one they can get into and out of quickly, easily, and not be seen. Above all they are opportunists.

“Next to having stout and friendly comrades, a man is chiefly emboldened by finding himself well armed in case of need.”

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

While most police will say that dense landscaping is an invitation to trouble and that statistically houses that cannot be seen from the street are at a higher risk for break-ins than houses that are, there are other landscaping tips they do not stress that they really should. Like their own "3-7" rule, especially if combined with thorny plants. IE: security landscaping.

The 3-7 Rule is to keep shrubs near the house no more than 3 feet high to deprive a potential intruder of a hiding place; Keep tree limbs at least 7 feet away from the side of the house and at least 12 feet off the ground, to deprive the intruder of easy access to a second level window or balcony.

This means thin out overgrown foliage on large shrubs to expose branch structure; if you can see through large plants, no one can hide behind or in them. If a plant is too overgrown, remove it and start over with one that's slower growing or lower to the ground. Prune shrubs for clear views from windows.



If you live in an urban or suburban area and you are considering building a wall or fence, you need to think about building codes. Securing an area usually requires complete enclosure and possibly a structure eight to 10 feet high. Most local building codes allow only six to seven feet, unless you obtain a variance. Vines on walls can help discourage graffiti but some vines will make the wall or fence climbable. Thinking security may dictate where walls or fences are installed and how high they should be. And high cinderblock or other thick walls can muffle noises like a neighbor of mine found out after he raised his backyard walls to 12 feet and an intruder accosted his wife. Us neighbors heard some muffled noises but could not quickly determine if it was kids playing one block over or from their house. As a result, we were a little slow to alert the authorities and help.



If you are determined to have a fence in these populated areas, consider picket fences, lattice with large openings, walls with open patterns or other see-through design, chain link (not pretty but cheap) or solid iron picket (nice looking but expensive).

If these walls or fences need a gate, avoid one from a deserted alley or pathway or blind corner and the like.

Seating in a fenced or walled area should be placed not only for relaxation, but in a place where you can see passerby, around your compound and so forth.

If you are in a rural area, a fenced courtyard or backyard would be nice to keep the kiddies and pets in and others out. To accomplish this and still more or less, follow the 3-7 Rule, my farmstead friend created a solid straw bale four and half foot high wall and imbedded broken, very sharp wine and beer bottle glass all along the outside and top of it. She has told me it was high enough that her children could not touch the top until they were old enough to know it was sharp and the deer were discouraged from the wall, even at night, as the motion sensor lights would reflect off the glass on the outside and top of the wall. She also told me that the glass did not stop a two legged intruder, but the wireless driveway alarm alerted her at the same time the lights startled him and even though he continued to intrude, she was alerted in time to give the bugger a very armed "welcome" and detention (tied up in her root cellar) until the county sheriff arrived to take him away.

Again, if living in an urban or suburban area, be sure to mow your lawn and have someone pick up newspapers and mail if you are away – IE: Don't advertise that your home is ripe for the picking.

"Jesus said, 'But now whoever has a purse or a bag, must take it and whoever does not have a sword must sell his cloak and buy one.'"

Luke 22:36



To keep burglars from reaching upper windows, remember the 3-7 Rule and keep ladders and your tools (garden/homesteading) out of sight and locked up! Windows in outbuildings on the compound should be at least 10-12 feet higher than the ground level outside the structure. This deprives the intruder from seeing inside and from having easy access to get into the structure, while still allowing plenty of light to shine in. Don't place sturdy trellises and gutters against walls of buildings that might be climbed to gain upper floor or high window access.

If your house is near a road or in a neighborhood, make sure your landscaping provides a clear view of your house from the road. Hidden homes are ideal for burglars. One of my friends on a semi-rural farm in Tennessee used to have several large evergreen trees and bushes, blocking most of their house from view from the road. Thieves took advantage of this one time when they were away. They have since cut them back.

*“If someone has a gun and is trying to kill you,
it would be reasonable to shoot back with your own gun.”
Dalai Lama*

So even if you live in the country it is not wise to have a thick border of shrubs blocking the view of your house from the road. If you do, it is best to keep them pruned low enough to allow visibility. Remember that 3-7 Rule. Or have some kind of wireless alarm or motion detector lighting that will go off and alert you.



As a homesteader or rural living person, even if your house is hidden from the road due to a long driveway, it would be wise to have a good clear view of all entry points around your home or inner compound and a wireless driveway alarm or two, to avoid “surprise” visitors. If you have additional buildings in your compound like barns and work sheds, it would be a good idea to utilize additional wireless driveway alarms and motion detection dusk to dawn outside lights for blind spots and the like. The additional seconds that these devices give you to protect yourself and yours, could be life savers. One of my friends in Idaho has wireless, motion detection sprinklers that go on when tripped. As he put it “a very cold, soggy, running away icicle intruder, that made cracking noises as he ran, is easier to hear, spot and catch than a dry quiet one.” Needless to say his intruder experience occurred in the winter.



As an additional incentive, a friend of mine in Wyoming uses the lights and alarms around his vegetable garden and orchard. He set the wireless audible alarm to blast (like an air horn) at the site instead of in his house and the motion detection lights to strobe –he says this has scared away bear, cougar, deer and elk. Not to mention that it alerts him, even while inside the farmstead sound asleep at o-dark-thirty. He is off-the-grid so the energy needed must be minimal or solar.



Urban, suburban or rural it is always wise to have good lighting in dark corners around the home and in the immediate yard or compound. Solar powered dusk to dawn coupled with solar motion sensor lighting is the best and shouldn't drain your energy supply. Even the fancy "up lighting" for trees and tall shrubs will help deprive intruders of a place to hide and many are solar powered as well. Not to mention that they make the compound look good to boot! My dear Montana homestead friends have these up pointing under the second story windows to rooms they do not have populated on a routine basis as well as on trees around their compound. They give them festive colors around the holidays. Looks great.

For additional tips see "Survivalist Uses For Solar Landscape Lights" By Joseph Parish @ <http://survival-training.info/articles14/Survivalistusesforsolarlandscapelights.pdf>

For great ideas on Wildfire Landscaping Defence "Landscaping Tips Tips to Help Defend Your Home from Wildfire" by University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources @ <http://firecenter.berkeley.edu/docs/CeMasterGardener8322.pdf>

"Those who beat their swords into plowshares usually end up plowing for those who didn't."

Ben Franklin



The next step to security landscaping is thorny plants. It's easy to see why intruders hate these plants because we hate to prune and trim them for the same reasons. But if security and defense are your wishes, these are great protectors and they look good to. Be forewarned: I had to look up the more official names and descriptions to most of these plants, so get someone in the know to help you.



Professional landscapers have often said that planting thorny thicket hedges, etc. are a very reliable way to secure your yard or home from intruders. However, careful planning and pruning is needed or these same hedges can become cover for intruders instead. Don't plant these kinds of thorny plants where children play, climb or dig with their hands. These shrubs can and do draw blood! Thorny plants also tend to collect trash and leaves. So make sure you wear thick gloves,

long sleeves, long pants and sturdy shoes, when pruning or removing debris that gets caught in the branches of these bushes.

If you live rurally, the fruit that some of these plants produce may draw four-legged interlopers closer to your home and livestock than you would like. So research and plan carefully.



Bird's Nest Spruce



English Yew

As with any plant, be sure to ascertain the plant's growth habit and size at full maturity, before purchasing or planting. You want to make sure it's scale and pruning needs match your lifestyle and your home. Also beware of non-native plants and try to find out if they will become intrusive in your environment. If they do, they will become way more work for you than the security they provide and in some areas are illegal to boot. I learned this lesson the hard way.



Holly



Rotunda Chinese holly

Some plants that are likely to wound intruders are: dwarf conifers, such as bird's nest spruces; low growing shrubs, such as English yews and globose blue spruces (*Picea pungens*), also known as "Glauca Globosa"; or thorny plants that stay small, about three to four feet high and wide. One shrub that people aren't likely to hide behind, with its tight mass of thorny leaves, is Rotunda Chinese holly; hardy oranges (*Poncirus trifoliata*); and devil's walking stick (*Aralia spinosa*) are also good.



Devil's Walking Stick



Bird's Nest Spruce

On the west coast and Rocky Mountain region, there is a wide variety of thorny landscaping plants to choose from.



Pyracantha



Barberry

Pyracantha and Barberry are two fast growing, evergreen shrubs with wicked thorns. Both can reach heights of about 15 feet and can be pruned into a tight, impenetrable hedge. The pyracantha has red, yellow or orange berries in the fall. The Barberry is characterized by their three-spined thorns. These are excellent to use along the perimeter of your property, smaller varieties are effective under windows.



Ferdy Hedge Rose



Wild Rose

Roses are beautiful solutions for creating security. One friend of mine planted a 75 foot rose hedge along the fence wall of his west side home (west of the Rio Grande), which has been effective in keeping people from hopping the fence from the arroyo that borders that side of his property.



Japanese Rose

Another variety of rose, called the Japanese rose, or *rosa rugosa* is a suckering shrub which can spread quite fast. It can grow between 5-7 feet in height, forms dense thickets and has zillions of wicked thorns on its stalks. This rose blooms once a year and is very attractive to nesting birds.



Hardy Orange



Holly

Security Landscaping and Lighting - Continued

Oregon Grape is a large evergreen shrub mostly found in the Northwest. It has a leaf like a holly, but produces small blossoms in the spring. In the summer, the berries resemble small concord grapes. Oregon Grape is one of the few plants that seem to do well beneath pine trees and in areas of little shade. This shrub grows to 4-6 feet in height, with a spread of up to 10 feet. These are excellent perimeter shrubs as well and practically impossible to crawl through. I had a cousin who made it through one of these as a kid. He still has the scar on his back as proof.



Oregon Grape



Thorny Olive

Holly is another variety of thorny plant. There are nearly 400 varieties of both trees and shrubs growing anywhere from 6 to 60 feet in height. Holly produces a bright red berry, which is mildly toxic. It's not a plant recommended with small children in the yard.



Blackberry

If your home is along an irrigation road, canal, arroyo, gully or alley, a row of blackberry or raspberry bushes provides a practical deterrent for any trespasser. These are fruit producing, suckering vines that can be trained to grow along a fence, like chain link. Left alone, they can turn into thickets as high as 10 feet. Berry bushes spread quite easily and are difficult to get rid of once established. They are best planted in areas where they won't interfere with other landscaping, gardening or agriculture.



Bougainvillea

Bougainvillea is a thorny vine with purple or yellow blossoms that can grow to lengths of up to 35 feet. It prefers warmer climates, and blooms frequently. Bougainvillea is ideal for fences and trellises.



Natal plums

Natal plums are another variety of southern plant that prefers warmer climates. This evergreen shrub reaches up to 7 feet in height, with a spread of 8-10 feet. It's characterized by a unique mounding shape and white, star shaped flowers.



Prickly Pear



Yucca

For desert residents, spine tipped yucca and prickly pear cactus are excellent plants for chasing off would be burglars. Prickly pear cactus are especially effective beneath windows. Many of the berry, holly and Pyracantha grow well in New Mexico, Arizona and Texas too.



Hawthorne Tree



Hawthorne Hedge

If you want thorny trees try: Hawthorne, this dense hedge grows 20 to 25 feet high and produces fragrant pink and white flowers. It has sharp thorns, which can range from 1 to 5 inches in length; Hardy Orange is a fruit-bearing tree often used around prisons. These grow 15 to 20 feet high and wide and are covered to the ground with lacerating thorns; Black Locust is resistant to rot and pollution and produces creamy white flowers and a pair of short thorns at the base of each leaf. My grandson calls them "surprise needles", as they are somewhat hidden from view. These are poisonous to horses and in some areas considered invasive.



Black Locust



*“Self defense is justly called the primary law of nature,
so it is not, neither can it be in fact,
taken away by the laws of society.”
Sir William Blackstone, 1765*

Basically, unless you surround your home with an electrified, walled, gated, razor wired, mined and moated compound, you'll never be able to keep people completely off your property and even then I doubt 100% is possible. But, by planting thorny shrubs and placing lighting and wireless alarms in areas where trespassers tend to collect or cut through or can hide, you will make your home, yard or compound less of a target for two and four legged intruders and at the very least, be alerted to the intrusion in enough time to protect and arm yourself and yours.



You can download this article @ <http://www.scribd.com/Urban-Suburban-Rural-Security-Landscaping-and-Lighting-with-pictures/d/32340407> and be sure to check out “Defending the Homestead or Home Beyond the Usual” @ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/28060925/Defending-the-Homestead-or-Home-Beyond-the-Usual>

From TNT a 50 Something Prepper.

*“No power on earth can subjugate you
when you are armed with the sword”
Mahatma Gandhi*