

keeping it safe

It's not just locks and alarms that can keep your home safe this summer.



Whether it's a large estate on the edge of a forest, or a tiny apartment in a happening part of the CBD, your own pad functions a bit like a personal security blanket. Which is why the experience of being burgled or intruded upon is so disquieting.

If you are about to enter the design phase for your new abode or its landscaping, why not incorporate features which deter criminals?

The idea that design is a successful deterrent to crime is not new. Several decades ago it was dubbed CPTED, or Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. City and regional councils routinely adopt CPTED principles to make their public parks, reserves and commercial spaces as safe as possible.

Start by thinking like a criminal intruder. What opportunities does your home present? Does it have a creepy, over-grown ambience?

Are big trees or shrubs obscuring views of your windows or doors from the street? Is your garden dark and solitary at night? Or is it well-lit, overlooked by the neighbours, and easily seen from the street?

Having a well-maintained property sends out signals which deter intruders. This is called Broken Windows Theory, in which vandals can see an unkempt property as an invitation to do further damage. An obvious demeanour of pride in your place says you're likely to be here often, and be aware of unexpected changes.

Christchurch landscape architect Graham Densem is well-versed in the principles of safe design. After recent involvement in the safe design of Canterbury's alpine village, Castle Hill, he is keen to preserve unobstructed sight-lines. In Castle Hill, the lack of residential fencing, with reserves threaded throughout

Holiday security... the final checklist

- Close and lock all doors and windows, and don't have hidden keys anywhere obvious outside.
- Televisions and computers shouldn't be visible from outside; hide them.
- Lock away official personal documents and financial details along with door and car keys – make these impossible to find by anyone but you and yours.
- Arrange to have newspaper deliveries stopped, and for neighbours to clear your letterbox and mow the front lawn if you'll be away for long.
- Never leave a message on the answer phone or social media such as Facebook about being away.

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the housing, serves to provide this, as well as lending a rural community feel.

"Being seen doing a criminal act is not high on a malevolent person's list of priorities," says Graham.

Fellow landscape architect Andrew Craig agrees that preserving uninterrupted sight-lines over your property is an age-old security principle. "It's the prospect/refuge theory which says humanity likes to sit on the edges looking inward, watching for both prospective threats and social/romantic opportunities. If these seating spots are warm, sheltered and with an open visual aspect, security is enhanced."

In a domestic setting, why not make use of passing traffic as a surveillance asset? It's actually beneficial to avoid long stretches of solid, high fencing, particularly between the house and street. Why not use wrought iron and personally design its lines for a distinctive effect? This has the added bonus of not being a typical tagging target.

Perceiving anew

Go out to the street and try to 'see' your home for the first time from every vantage

point. Which way appears to take you to the main entry? Could you further clarify this main entrance? Does it look well maintained today? Could an intruder break in, completely unseen? Could high bushes be culled or thinned? Interestingly, research reveals that outdoor spaces with trees are seen as significantly more attractive, safer, and usable than gardens without, so don't get rid of trees altogether.

Do the same check at daybreak and nightfall. Would extra sensor lighting help make entrances, exits, and burglar alarm signs highly visible, no matter when? Are there shadowy areas in your garden? Some help with lighting now may pay dividends in future, to avoid glare or blind spots. It's often better to use several light fixtures of lower intensity, placed at exactly the right height, to illuminate visitors' faces.

If you have back or side gardens, it's always a good idea to have a locking gate between these and the front of your home.

Do you have ground floor windows that can't be seen from the road or neighbours? Why not plant some low, thorny bushes underneath to discourage entry? Climbing (barbed) roses are so pretty, no-one will suspect your ulterior motive.

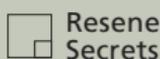
The scaffolding effect

If you have been burgled in the past, could it be because there's access to roofs or upper levels? Could you alter the design so there isn't? Also, if your property bounds a public alley-way, that's where the fencing should be solid, without footholds or views through. Where your fences are shared with neighbours, open-style shoulder-height fencing is probably the most secure, sociable option.

Counter-intuitively perhaps, CPTED principles don't suggest you use barbed wire atop your fences. That's because these seem to suggest there'll be no-one home watching.

You don't want to appear paranoid about security; just proud of owning and maintaining a quality home. **H**

words Liesl Johnstone



top tip

If you are constantly being tagged, use the specially developed anti-graffiti finish, Resene Uracryl GraffitiShield. Once cured, you will be able to quickly wash away any graffiti using Resene Graffiti Cleaner without damaging the paint finish.

