

KENT POLICE

## Autumn Crime Prevention message

Kent Police is urging people to be on their guard against the theft of tools and garden equipment now the nights are drawing in.

A number of burglaries have been reported in the Ashford area where tools and equipment have been targeted.

Inspector Jason Atkinson of Ashford Community Safety Unit said: 'Unfortunately the clocks going back provides opportunist thieves with a greater opportunity to commit their crimes under the cover of darkness.

'It is a good time for people to review the security of their sheds, garages, outbuildings and vehicles and guard against the theft of tools and garden equipment.

'Most people make sure their homes are secure but often their sheds and outbuildings are not such a high priority. Unfortunately they can provide rich pickings for thieves as they are often packed with expensive tools and machinery,' he said.

Two men were disturbed attempting to break into a domestic garage in Smarden Bell Road, Smarden, at 4.25pm on Saturday 3 November 2018. The men, both white and aged between 30 and 35, had put aside a leaf blower and a bike ready to take but left the scene empty-handed.

A lawnmower was stolen from the garage of a house in Standard Lane, Bethersden, at about 2.30pm on Saturday 3 November 2018. A silver Ford was seen nearby.

The same day a black canvas-style bag containing a mixture of cordless tools was stolen along with a leaf blower, a strimmer, a jewellery box, cufflinks, watches and cash from a house in Woodchurch Road, Shadoxhurst.

Inspector Atkinson said: 'The good news is there are ways people can protect their property.

'Make life difficult for opportunist thieves by locking garden equipment securely away and using good quality locks and shed and padlock alarms. Make sure security lights are working properly.

'Disable ride-on mowers and chain expensive equipment together or to secure anchor points. Keep an inventory of your equipment, including serial numbers and photos of expensive items.

'Defensive planting, which is using prickly plants on boundaries, also acts as a deterrent and can help catch criminals through DNA if they are cut on the thorns.

'It is also worth investing in an alarmed padlock, which is a heavy duty lock that has a built-in 120 decibel alarm - enough to deter even the most determined of thieves,' he said.

Operation Castle, the force's annual burglary prevention campaign, was launched at the end of October to raise awareness about home security and encourage the public to take extra measures to protect their property over the winter months.

To find out more visit the burglary page on the Kent Police website.