

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR GARDEN IN STRONG WINDS



If you know that a storm or particularly strong gales are expected, you should take the time to secure your garden.

Gales are the most common cause of damage and disruption in the UK. Once a major storm hits, it may be too late to protect your property.

There are several things that can be done to protect your property and limit potential wind damage.

Protect your belongings

Bring smaller items like potted plants inside and take down hanging planters that could crash into windows. Garden tools and equipment can be seriously damaged by windy weather and become incredibly dangerous if picked up by the wind. To keep your garden equipment safe, secure and looking its very best for longer, store it in dry conditions and ensure that everything is fully dry before putting away.

We recommend that you invest in a good quality shed to protect larger items that can't be brought inside the house for safe keeping. If you already have a shed, make sure that it is in good enough condition to withstand adverse weather conditions. In particular, check that your roofing felt is secure.

Replacing split and worn roofing felt is an important task you need to do if you want your garden equipment, tools and furniture to stay in good condition. If you do not have roofing felt on your shed it's easy to install, flexible, strong and durable. Felting your shed roof will help weatherproofing and protecting valuable tools in extreme weather conditions.

Top tip - Damage to shed doors is common in high winds. Keep them closed and securely locked. This will not only prevent the wind blowing them off the hinges, but it will deter burglars in winter months.

Secure your garden

Secure any outdoor objects and equipment that could be lifted by the wind. Make sure smaller items are properly restrained or moved inside to avoid becoming flying debris that could damage yours or someone else's home.

Anchor and secure larger items such as tables, chairs, trampolines and play equipment. There are many ways to safely secure these objects including weights, ropes, chains and stakes. Sheds should be firmly fixed to a strong base.

Fencing

Fences provide practical privacy and shelter against the stormy weather and can also bear the brunt of much of the bad weather including rain and high winds.

Make sure all your boundary fences are secure and posts are firmly set in the ground. Wooden fences are prone to rot, making them weak. To prolong their life, treat them regularly with wood stain and preservative. The part of a wooden fence post most venerable is the section buried underground. If not reinforced in time, it will eventually collapse and pull down the entire fence, especially in high winds.

See our [How To Re-inforce A Rotten Fence Post](#) guide for more information.

Top tip - If you live in an area prone to high winds, you might want to consider replacing your fences. Wooden fences create a block for the wind that eventually forces the fence to the ground. For strong wind resistance, you need to build a fence with gaps in it to let the wind blow through it. This reduces strain put on the fence and reduces the chances that it will collapse.

Trimming and maintaining large trees

Falling trees and blowing debris in storms often cause severe structural damage. It is your responsibility to maintain trees in your garden, removing weak branches and trimming trees that could fall and cause damage.

Prune rather than cutting down a tree

Many people have a tree cut down because they're afraid it is too big and will fall over. Trees do fall over or drop limbs, but rarely because they are too big.

Removing whole tops of trees or large branches creates unsightly and sometimes hazardous rotten trees. It stimulates rapid growth of small weak limbs which are more likely to fall, damaging your property. If you want to keep your tree small and safe the best option is to prune the tree. This will reduce the bulk of a tree, letting in more light and allowing wind to pass through. Reducing wind resistance will make your tree safer.

Top tip - The ideal time to prune a tree is during the first ten years after planting. This will help you "train" the tree.

Signs of potentially hazardous trees include mushrooms or white sheeting and cracks on the trunk, excess dead wood, heavy cone set, large hollows and cut or disturbed roots.

Protecting your plants

High winds can cause serious damage to plants. Windy weather dries out leaves leading to browning, scorching, loss of buds, flowers and leaves, and in severe cases plants can be uprooted. Here are a few things you can do to prevent damage:

- Windbreaks can be installed using netting or mesh. These filter the wind, reducing its strength.
- Use canes to support plants. Be sure not to tie them too tightly to plants, as this will cause breakage. Plants need to have some movement.
- Keep plants, especially potted ones well watered during periods of high winds.
- Place potted plants against a sheltered house wall.
- Insulate containers by wrapping them with bubble wrap.

Investing in a Growhouse or Coldframe

If you're really worried about extreme weather damaging your garden, it's worth investing in some sturdy plant protection.

Growhouses –

These are economical alternatives to traditional greenhouses, and are ideal for plant propagation and protection, or for hardening off plants heading from the warm greenhouse to the garden.

Coldframes –

These bring warmth and shelter to your garden and help your seeds to become strong, healthy plants.