

Exterior Security Ideas

Plant materials ("foundation plantings") should be trimmed so that they are not any higher than the sills of the windows or they have no branches below three feet to create a clear-view zone. Plants should not create places of concealment, particularly adjacent to the entrance or at bedroom windows. If plants are overgrown, ask to have them trimmed before buying. If you are selecting plant materials, work with the landscape designer to ensure that the materials selected will not grow to create a problem.

If the yard is fenced, are there any gates? If so, where do they lead, and can they be locked? Remember that privacy fences limit the ability of your neighbors and police/security patrols to see the enclosed area; if you don't really need the privacy, consider a cyclone or other fencing material which does not block open view.

Buried utilities are far less susceptible to interruption, and are unlikely to be manipulated by criminals. See whether the service entrance for the residence is inside the perimeter fence, so it is more difficult for the criminal to access. If the telephone and/or cable come in overhead, look to see where the nearest above-ground splice-boxes are located and whether those locations are inside fenced yards or are accessible to anyone.

There should be a light fixture outside every door on a house to enable a scan of the area to be accomplished safely from inside. Consideration should be given to use of globes on such fixtures, which are vandal-resistant. It is possible to wire such fixtures to a photo-cell or timer so that they automatically come on at dusk and turn off at dawn. This arrangement ensures the exterior of your home is illuminated during hours of darkness and makes it more difficult for an observer to tell when you are gone. Very inexpensive (starting at about \$20) motion sensors can also be

installed in almost any existing exterior fixture (as part of a new fixture, or as an add-in for existing fixtures) that will turn on the light automatically when anyone approaches the door. These can generally be adjusted to determine how close someone needs to approach before the light is activated. Most of these devices also have a photo-cell so they don't activate during the daytime. New systems available not only turn outside lights on, but can also turn many lights in the home on and off at different times during the night, giving the illusion of someone being home.

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