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Defensive Plants That Can Protect Your Home

By Stacie Hougland



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Long before Ring systems kept a lookout from the front porch, people have used what amounts to biological razor wire to protect their homesteads and livestock. What masters of pain make great (and great looking) defensive yard additions?

Roses



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The O.G. of defensive plants is the rose, which by any other name would be just as unfriendly. Not only do they deliver a nasty poke, rose thorns can actually cause disease thanks to a fungus that causes inflammation, swelling and can even get into the lymph system!

Barrel cactus



SHUTTERSTOCK

Also hilariously known as "mother-in-law's seat," barrel cactus is low-growing, with brutal spines growing along each rib. Nobody's going to sit, stand or otherwise mess with this plant, no matter how much you'd like your mother-in-law to take five on one.

Bougainvillea



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Quite possibly the prettiest defensive plant you can protect your property with, bougainvillea comes in 18 species that can be climbing vines or shrubs. Either way, nobody dares battle their way through their spiky, woody branches and the sap can cause a severe reaction for anyone allergic.

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Honey locust

Honey locust, native to the central U.S., is pure nightmare fuel for intruders, especially since it can be grown as a 90-foot-tall tree or kept as a spiky shrub. Nobody's climbing it to get to that second story unless they're wearing full armor. In late spring it flowers into beautiful, creamy blooms, so... bonus.

Blackberry

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If you have a large area to defend, blackberry plants grow quickly into impenetrable, brambly thickets that can be hard to control. Young plants have short, sharp prickles that can easily tear into denim (and your skin, meaning gloves are a must when picking the delicious fruit).

California fuchsia

Just look at the spines on this plant - they're as long as the flowers! They like shade, so they're a strategic plant for that forgotten part of your yard. Best of all they attract hummingbirds - not someone hoping to rob your house.

Blackthorn

The Brits of yore knew this plant was good for several things: making sloe gin (its tart berries are called "sloes") and as a thorny, 10-foot-high hedge to protect their cattle. Those thorns can be two inches long, so maybe buying sloe gin is a better bet than making it at home.

Cholla cactus

It may be called the "teddy bear cactus," but it's anything but cuddly. Desert rats are known to collect its spines to keep predators out of their nests, so it makes sense people can use it as well to keep unwanted visitors out. The spines are loosely connected and will snag whatever, or whoever, passes too close.

Holly

Holly's dark, leathery, spiny leaves grow densely together and it is evergreen, so it's nice and green (and defensive) all year. Holly makes an excellent hedge around a perimeter. Its bright red berries show up in fall.

Crown of thorns

Viewed from above, this evergreen succulent's lovely blooms hide the vicious thorns on its thick stem, making it a great defensive mechanism for anyone lurking around windows or fences. Even its sap is poisonous.

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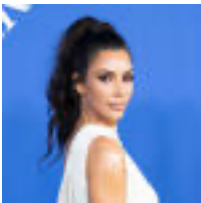
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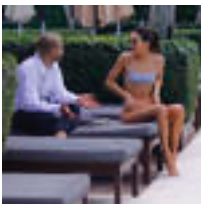
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