

NEWS FOR THOUGHT

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Take Back Your Garage

Is it time to organize your garage? It is if the space is cluttered with bikes, toys, tools, sports equipment and homeless household items. Another good indication is where you park your vehicle. If there's no room to park in the garage, it's time to divide and conquer.

There are numerous companies dedicated to helping you organize your garage and maximize the entire space. New products and ideas will make organizing your garage a fun and rewarding weekend project.



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If you're wondering where it's all going to go, maybe the first step is to spend a few hours sorting through the chaos to see what you actually have. Here are a few ideas to help you get started.

Separate the clutter into piles.

For example, all lawn care equipment (hoses, shovels, rakes, etc.) should be together, gather all of the kids sports paraphernalia into another pile, golf clubs and equipment in yet another pile... you get the picture. This way, you know what you're dealing with in terms of organizing.

Be sure to create a "donate pile" and a "toss it" pile. Items you don't use can be donated. If something is broken and it's been that way for more than a year, face the fact that you simply don't have the time to fix it, and get rid of it. It's amazing how much stuff we keep that no longer serves a purpose.

Find a home for everything.

Now you know what needs to be stored. The local home improvement stores are a good place to start evaluating storage systems to meet your needs.

When figuring out where everything is going to go, there are several options available. The first option to consider is tool hangers. You'll find an assortment of hangers which are ideal for hanging yard and garden tools such as rakes, leaf blowers, hoses, hoes, spades and bulb diggers. Hangers allow you to reclaim floor and corner space where all of these implements would usually be stored. And, by securing them in a hanger on the flat surface of a

wall, they are no longer a tripping hazard.

Prefabricated shelving is another option. Some are made of plastic, others steel, and some have steel frames with wood shelves. These storage systems come in a kit that you assemble yourself. One benefit of this type of storage system is mobility -- it can be moved around the space as your storage needs change.

It's important to note, however, that prefabricated shelving should be secured to a wall or other support, especially if children live in or visit the home. Children climbing on the shelves can cause the shelving system to tip over if not properly attached, so take precaution.

If you want a more permanent solution, consider a customized shelving system. The cost is a bit more and takes a little longer to build, but typically requires just a hammer, screwdriver, and a drill to complete the installation. The most common type of permanent shelving systems are made of rubber-coated wire racks. They'll last a lifetime and if installed and supported correctly, they're surprisingly strong. Countless add-on features make these systems quite versatile. Build the system to suit the space and your individual storage needs.

Don't forget about the ceiling.

One of the most under-utilized spaces in the entire house is the overhead space in the garage. Several options exist for overhead storage in your garage depending on how the ceiling is finished. But even if your garage ceiling has wallboard on

it, you can still utilize the space.

Large hooks can be purchased that screw into the joists. Some have a rounded hook and others have a rectangular hook. Sizes and weight loads vary. Most hooks have a protective rubber coating to protect your belongings from damage by the hook itself. There are a wide variety of hangers available that will allow you to suspend everything from ladders to bicycles to kayaks.

Make room for the tools. For many of us, the garage doubles as a work space. If your tools are scattered all over the garage and your home, now is the time to create a special place for each one. A pegboard and tool chest help keep tools safe and handy.

A Clean Sweep. Before you start putting everything back into the garage, sweep the floor and hose it down to get rid of accumulated dirt, dust and cobwebs.

With a little time and compartmentalizing, you'll be amazed at how much space you really have and it will be easier than ever to find what you're looking for. Any of these projects can be done in an afternoon and most require very little technical knowledge.

An organized garage makes it easy for people to find things when they need them, and put them back in the right place when they're done.

- Gary Monfeli

