

Home & Garden Television

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Garage Organization Ideas

Cluttered garage? Follow the zone approach to garage organization and you'll be able to park your car with room to spare.

By Douglas Trattner

Garages have become the dumping ground for our homes. Many are so stuffed with clutter that there is no longer room even to park the car. By designing a zone system based on the activities we pursue on a daily, weekly and seasonal basis, we can free up enough room in our garage for everything that needs to be there — even the car.

"Garages should be organized into activity zones that make it very intuitive for everybody in the family," explains Marlene Hansen, of [Organize & Maximize, LLC](#). A Phoenix-based professional organizer, Hansen asks her clients to think like a hardware store. "I tell them to picture how a hardware store is arranged, with like items grouped with like items," she says. This common-sense approach to organization makes it easy for people to find things when they need them, and put them back in the right place when they're done.

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Garden Tools

Following a common-sense approach to garage organization, professional organizer [Marlene Hansen](#) says that "activity zones should be placed as close as possible to where the items will be used." In the case of garden tools, the ideal placement is near a side door leading to the yard. If the garage has no side door, then the next best location is a spot close to the opening.



Before: Unusable garage. Photo by Marlene Hansen.



After: Marlene Hansen, of [Organize & Maximize, LLC](#) transformed an unusable space into the ultimate in garage organization. Photo by Marlene Hansen.

Before: Overwhelming garage clutter.
Photo by [Chaos to Order](#).



After: Practical zone storage reclaims this once-cluttered space organized by [Chaos to Order](#).

If the homeowner is a frequent gardener, or lives in a climate that requires year-round maintenance, Hansen suggests a rolling garden tool organizer, like those sold at [Frontgate](#). These handy carts have slots for long-handled rakes and shovels, pockets for pruners and gloves and homes for hand tools. When needed, the carts and their cargo can be wheeled right into the garden. For those who do as little yard work as possible, it makes more sense to stow the tools in totes. This way, the homeowner can grab the items when they're needed, and stow them away on a back shelf when they're not.

Regardless of your green thumb, Hansen urges that all fertilizers, herbicides and other hazardous materials be stowed in a locked cabinet or, at the very least, out of reach of little ones. And if you prefer the grass seed to end up on the lawn rather than in a chipmunk's cheeks, it should be

stored in a metal container.

Sporting Goods

When it comes to sports gear, Karen Law, of Minneapolis-based [Contained Design](#), follows the mantra: *Hang it, hook it, don't prop it*. "Everybody loves to prop things against a wall," Law says. Not only does this approach waste both floor and wall space, it invariably leads to damaged sporting equipment. "As soon as someone slams a door, that snowboard will slide down the wall and get run over by the car," she warns.

Like everything in the zone system, items should be organized based on what it is, who uses it and how often it is used. "Adults can remove bicycles from a ceiling hook, but a child needs easy access," Law explains. A pulley system that raises and lowers bikes when needed works well for adults, as do simple wall or ceiling hooks. Kids' bikes and other sports gear should be placed near the garage door so they can easily access them without banging and scratching the car. For frequently used gear like bats, balls, gloves, helmets, skates and sticks, a sports equipment organizer — like those found at [Dick's Sporting Goods](#) — is the best way to go.

Off-season sporting goods should be stowed away in clearly marked plastic bins. Ventilated bins work best for items that tend to get sweaty, like helmets, knee pads and gloves. An inexpensive solution for bulky, but light, pool toys is a hammock strung over the car.

Holiday Decorations

"If you want to keep your garage organized, you need to keep it seasonal," says Monica Friel, a Chicago-based organizer with [Chaos to Order](#). In the zone system of garage organization, items are stored in groups based on activity and frequency of use. Holiday decorations that come out for a week or two once a year should be stored together, but also out of the way. Storage systems like [SafeRacks](#) attach to the ceiling and create remote storage space, making them ideal for seldom used items like Christmas lights, Halloween goblins and the Thanksgiving scarecrow.

Consider storing holiday decorations in clear plastic tubs with color-coded tops: orange for Halloween, green for Christmas, red for Fourth of July.



Before: Unfinished garage. Photo by [Chaos to Order](#).



After: Monica Friel from [Chaos to Order](#) turned an unfinished garage into a super-organized space. Photo by Chaos to Order.

Automotive Supplies, Tools, Paint

"Many people pull their cars into the garage much farther than they need to," [Monica Friel](#) says. A professional organizer in tight-on-space Chicago, Friel recommends that her clients purchase parking blocks that signal the driver when the car is safely in the garage. Of course, the old tennis-ball-on-a-string works just fine, too.

The freed-up space at the front of the garage is ideal for a vertical storage system, like those from [Gladiator GarageWorks](#) or [Garage Envy](#), on which you can assemble all the automotive supplies, tools and car-care items like buckets, sponges, soap and wax. For folks on a budget, Friel suggests affordable particle-board shelving and common peg board-and-hook systems. Hobbyists and tinkerers should consider buying (or building) a sturdy workbench.

Regardless of the solution, it should include a lockable storage cabinet for all dangerous power tools, paints, chemicals and solvents.

Garbage

"An open garage is the window to one's home," says [Monica Friel](#), a Chicago-based organizer. And because many of us keep our garbage in the garage, we might as well have cans with useable lids and working wheels. Not only do wheels make it easy to transport the trash to the curb, they allow you to move the cans out of the way to access other items. People often neglect to utilize the space above the garbage cans. A tall shelving unit, like a customizable open-wire system, can be adjusted to fit over the cans. Since this is the garbage zone, the shelves should be used to store trash bags, recycling bins and bags, lawn waste bags and twine to bundle the newspaper.

Douglas Trattner is a Cleveland-based freelance writer. His articles on dining and travel, entertainment, and home improvement have appeared in Wine & Spirits, FineLiving.com, Feast! Magazine and Cleveland Free Times, where he is also Food Editor.