

The American GARDENER

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New Plants for 2007

Garden Path Primer

Container Gardening:
Choosing the Right Pot

beautiful
**Winter
Buds**

Let's Get Organized

by Rita Pelczar

WHAT BETTER way to start the new year than with a resolution to clean out and organize your green garage? After all, organization is the key to efficiency (and safety). There are lots of ideas and techniques to help you keep your garden tools in order, so let's get to it!

Gardening tools and supplies—from trowels, potting soil, and pots to lawn mowers, hoses, and wheelbarrows—tend to consume a lot of space, particularly if your system of storage is one of more or less controlled chaos. If you find yourself spending more time sorting through clutter to locate the tools you need for a job than actually doing the job, it's time to get organized.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Whether your green garage is a closet in your apartment, a dedicated garden shed, or a multi-bay structure you share with the family cars and sports equipment, the basic strategy to developing an efficient storage system applies. The following tips should help you get started:

- Start by grouping your supplies and tools into categories such as seed-starting supplies, soil and soil amendments, containers, hand tools, long-handled tools, power tools, and so on. If you share storage space with non-gardening items, establish categories for these, too, but locate them apart from the gardening supplies if you can.
- Eliminate duplicates and broken tools. If you are not likely to fix a tool, you might as well donate it to someone who will. And if you only need one, why keep two?
- Place the items you use most often in easy reach. If you grab your pruners and a



Organized tools and gardening supplies on display in the Green Garage exhibit at River Farm.

pair of gloves every time you head to the garden, keep them handy and return them to the same spot when you're done. Your bulb planter, on the other hand, which you use once or twice a year, can be stored further back. For items on shelves, place those most frequently used at waist height and store those used less often on high or low shelves.

- Store replacement parts near the appropriate tool. That way you'll know where to look when you need them.
- Get as many of your tools off the floor as possible. Many can be hung while others are better stored on shelves. This saves floor space and makes cleanup much easier. Arranging tools conspicuously on a wall also helps you locate them quickly when you need them. For safety, face the sharp edges of shovels, rakes, pitch forks, and hoes toward the wall.
- Follow the manufacturer's weight limit recommendations for all hooks or hanging supports.

- Store pesticides and dangerous tools in locked cabinets or on an elevated shelf to keep them out of children's reach.

SIMPLE STORAGE SYSTEMS

Garage storage systems range from simple braces, nails, and hooks to complete prefabricated garage wall systems; all aim to reduce garden tool clutter. The style and details of your storage system will depend on how much you have to store, how much space you have to store it, and how much money you want to spend.

"Garden tool caddies and organizers are great for storing and carrying tools to every project in the yard," says Deborah Wandner Shearer, vice president of marketing for Organize.com. Tool caddies and free-standing tool bins with or without wheels are available in a variety of sizes suitable for both hand tools and long-handled tools.

Hanging up tools makes good use of wall space and keeps the tools off the floor



Above left: For small tools and small spaces, the Space Logic™ tool organizer is ideal. Above right: Ladders can be mounted on sturdy wall brackets like this one. Right: Hanging tools can be firmly secured with the Ultra Hold Yard Tool Rack from Organize-It.

for easy cleanup. The most basic style, which works well for unfinished garage spaces where the studs are exposed, is to drive sturdy nails into studs from which tools are hung. For long-handled tools, use a single nail; for hand tools, a short length of a one-by-two-inch furring strip can be nailed horizontally between studs, with short nails or hooks spaced along the strip that will provide a hold for several tools. If the tools lack holes in their handles, you may need to drill them.

Another simple storage technique for unfinished garages is to nail a horizontal brace to the outer edge of exposed studs two to three feet above the floor or foundation. Tools can be stored upright in the space behind the brace.

If your space is tight and your tools few, the Space Logic™ tool organizers created by Case Logic might just fill the bill. They come in a variety of sizes that will suit indoor gardeners in particular as well as those with limited garage

space. The polyester organizer mounts with screws to any surface, and holds hand tools, seeds, and other small gardening supplies. A slightly larger option, for indoor and outdoor tools, is the compact Heavy Duty Lawn and Garden Rack from Organize-It. It has space for a few long-handled tools, a small shelf, a removable basket, and an arm to hold a garden hose or extension cord, and is only 23 inches wide.

If you have finished walls in your garage, or you prefer a more refined look, consider one of the devices designed specifically for tool storage. The versatile Wall Racks from Duluth Trading Company are simple and sturdy; they consist of one or two spikes that extend from a flat plate that is secured to the wall. Four sizes are available, providing storage for long- and short-handled tools as well as hoses and extension cords.

The Sure Lock Hang-All Organizers from TidyGarage consist of spring-held grips that are ideal for holding long-handled tools, with steel hooks between each to hold even more. The 20-inch organizer has five grippers and six hooks for lots of storage in less than two feet of

Sources

Dan Lipman & Associates, Locust Valley, NY. (888) 634-7752.
www.tool-organizer.com.

Duluth Trading Co., Belleville, WI. (800) 505-8888. www.duluthtrading.com.

GarageTek, Syosset, NY. (866) 664-2724. www.garagetek.com.

Organize.com, Riverside, CA. (800) 600-9817. www.organize.com.

Organize-It, Shelby Township, MI. (800) 210-7712. www.organizes-it.com.

PremierGarage, Phoenix, AZ. (480) 483-3030. www.PremierGarage.com.

Schulte Corp., Cincinnati, OH. (800) 669-3225. www.schultestorage.com.

TidyGarage, Windsor, Ontario, Canada. (888) 442-7243. www.tidygarage.com.

