



Tips for organizing your garage

BY ERIK J. MARTIN, CTW FEATURES

It's the spot in your property that is often most taken for granted and left cluttered. The problem is that an untidy garage can result in frustration, family arguments, the need to rebuy products you can't find, and even injuries. Whether it's a mancave, she-shed, or a long-term storage unit you don't visit often; it's smart to devote cleanup efforts and employ better structure to your garage.

"Organizing your garage presents multiple benefits, including increased functionality, enhanced storage space, and more room to park your cars. It also makes it easier to clean this area," says Aaron Cash, co-founder and partner of Garage Living. "An inefficient, dirty, and disorderly garage can make it difficult to park and hard to find the items you want, and it may invite unwanted pests."

A recent Craftsman survey found that most homeowners primarily use the garage for storing vehicles (76%), but many also employ this space as a

workspace for home improvement projects (47%), gardening/outdoor projects (47%), or automotive projects (38%). Over 25% of survey respondents said they use their garage for a side hustle, and more than 40% use their garage as a gym to exercise in. But all of these activities are difficult to achieve in a messy garage.

"Organizing your garage twice a year is ideal. Leveraging the seasons can be the times in which you clean up this space," recommends Elizabeth Dodson, co-founder of HomeZada. "Spring is the time of renewal, an ideal season when you can move out all your cars, completely clean out your garage, and sort through what you want and don't want."

For a more spatially efficient, neat, and orderly garage, follow these recommendations:

- Remove everything from your garage and lay items on your driveway for sorting. "Try to group similar items together. Sort belongings into like categories. For

instance, tools, sports equipment, and gardening supplies," advises Christian Pfeiffer, a professional organizer in Phoenix.

- Determine what you want to keep. Review each item and decide what's still usable versus what can be discarded, recycled, or donated.
- Thoroughly clean out your empty garage. Scrub or wipe down walls and surfaces and carefully sweep the floor. "Consider using a power washer to really give your garage a shine, especially if you are located in wintery states where slush and salt are likely to build up from vehicles," recommends Eric Bernstein, president/general manager of CRAFTSMAN for Stanley Black & Decker.
- Create zones. "Designate separate zones for different purposes, such as a workbench area, a storage area for seasonal items, and a space for sports equipment," Pfeiffer continues.
- Label everything. Use clear containers or labels to identify the contents of boxes in storage bins, making it simpler to locate items when needed.
- Invest in storage solutions. Purchase specialized storage products like overhead racks, peg boards, stackable bins, rolling racks, and wire mesh shelves to optimize space further and keep items organized. "If you have a lot of hand and power tools and need something more heavy-duty, think about metal storage options like chests, rolling cabinets, workstations, or even suites. If you need mobile storage, look at portable storage systems

that you can take with you on the go," Bernstein adds.

- Take advantage of vertical space. Consider installing wall-mounted storage systems or shelving units to maximize the real estate on walls and to keep the floor clear. "Invest in garage cabinets, which can create much better organization. Once you have the cabinets installed, store like items in specific drawers or cabinet areas. For instance, place tools in one area and planting or gardening items in another cabinet location," Dodson suggests.

When organizing products, consider the weight, size, and visibility of what you want to store in your garage.

"Heavy-duty shelving units and rolling racks are essential for storing bulky items and maximizing vertical space. Pegboards, slat walls, and fastbacks with hook accessories are ideal for organizing tools and various gear," Pfeiffer says. "Clear plastic bins, heavy-duty totes, and weather-right storage containers are great for storing items you want visible, items that are heavy, and products you want protected from dust or outside elements. And overhead storage racks are perfect for storing seasonal items or large, infrequently used belongings out of the way."

Before buying and installing any of these storage products, consider garage accessibility and accommodating your vehicles.

"You need to consider the space within your garage," Dodson says. "Many cars are getting longer today, and if you have cabinets on a wall but the garage is not long enough or wide enough to store your car, you may not be able to fit it."



Winging It: Creating a Colorful Butterfly Garden in Your Yard

BY NANCY MATTIA, CTW FEATURES

Imagine your backyard becoming a hot spot for flights of fluttering butterflies. Attracting these winged wonders is easy when you create a butterfly garden outfitted with the simple things they need to survive. Before long, they will be frequent visitors to your yard. How to build it?

According to the National Wildlife Federation, only a few things are needed to get this special garden up and running: flowers, rocks, sun, and water. A garden made exclusively for butterflies not

only enhances the setting with vibrant colors and soft textures but helps supply nourishment during a butterfly's life cycle, from the egg to the caterpillar (larvae) to the chrysalis (pupa) and finally to the adult. Whether butterflies are sipping nectar from blooms, drinking water from puddles, resting their wings on rocks, or flitting from flower to flower, which aids in pollination, offering a garden for these essential insects is worth your time and effort. Here's what you need to know:

The best flowers to plant

Fragrant flowering plants that are native to your area and which come in bright colors, especially orange, purple, pink, red, and yellow, tend to attract butterflies more than non-fragrant plants in white or pale shades. When deciding which flowers to buy, pick those that provide nectar butterflies drink to survive. Good nectar-rich flowers: salvia, lavender, and sunflowers. It's a smart idea to plant a variety of species and colors—you'll attract more butterflies if you don't limit the offerings to one color or one type. Keep a flower's bloom time in mind, too: The Wildlife Federation says that butterflies need nectar throughout the adult phase of their lifespan, and it recommends being strategic: Plant so that when one plant stops blooming, another begins.

Insecticides are not recommended

These substances are intended to kill insects but can also kill non-target, nectar-feeding insects like butterflies, says the Wildlife Federation, which suggests

that you avoid spraying insecticides on your garden.

Where you plant makes a big difference

To thrive, butterflies need warmth, so plant your garden in the sunniest spot in your yard. Add a few large flat rocks so these cold-blooded insects can bask in the sun, warm up, and rest their wings for future flight. They also need shelter from wind, rain, and predators like spiders and wasps, so plant dense conifer trees like cypress and spruce to provide protection.

They need water, too

Since butterflies can't land on water—making outdoor fountains, bird baths, and garden ponds useless water sources—muddy puddles (a mixture of sand and moist soil) are created for them. The insects will stay on the outer rim of a puddle and drink the moisture. This behavior is known as "puddling," and it not only provides moisture but also salts and other dissolved minerals that butterflies need.