

get it SORTED!

Why wait until spring to tidy up, when you can start the new year with a clean slate – and garden workspace?
KIRSTEN COLVIN shows how you can get organised now

Are you one of those people who keeps their shed immaculate at all times with nothing out of place? Move along, there's nothing for you to see here. For the rest of you, it's time to get serious about your garage, shed or wherever you keep your gardening gear. All you need is time and a plan of attack.

the big picture

Consider what you have now, from a multi-purpose garage, to a garden shed or gardening-related stuff in the corner of your laundry, balcony or verandah. Is it a serious chuck out or just a re-order? If your current storage isn't working, there are plenty of solutions for different sized spaces.

Large, light items fit in the rafters, while wall space is good for getting stuff off the floor

Garages and larger spaces

First, figure out how many workspaces (workbench, potting bench and the like) and immovable items (such as a chest freezer) you need within the overall space. Work out where they'll go (under the lights preferably), and fit storage around them. Large, lightweight items can go in the rafters, while wall space is good for getting stuff up off the floor.

When it comes to tools, the main thing is to keep them dry. Forget pegboards with tool outlines; they take up too much space. Stand long tools in an oversized bucket or a floor-standing tool storage rack (some fit neatly into a dead corner) or hang them on

the wall. There are plenty of custom-made and integrated wall track systems around, with slide-in accessories and hooks for every item you can think of, from rakes to wheelbarrows. Then again, you could just buy as many individual wall hooks or S-shaped hooks as you need.

Shelves are great for finding what you need at a glance. If you have a really large space, professional organiser Georgie Rees from Clutterfly (clutterfly.com.au) recommends using shelves to create 'aisles', making the most of your floor space. Also, be sure the shelves you choose can take the maximum weight of the items you're putting on them. Co-ordinated shelving units lend some uniformity

and order to a space, but go for rugged ones that are quick to put together. Some of the cheaper, lighter ones take hours to assemble.

Sheds and medium-size spaces

Often sheds are dumping grounds for old sprays and things that 'might come in handy one day' (reality check: they probably won't). Again, use shelves or the walls, or at least put the tools you use most near the door – even on the door, if it'll take the weight. Unlike garages, many sheds have no internal lights and chances are you're not keen to delve into those back corners. Do yourself a favour and get a solar shed light. ►



Compact storage

When you only need to store hand tools and smaller items, a potting bench is ideal. Sophie Thomson was impressed with one she saw recently: "A great potting bench at a salvage yard had been upcycled from a barbecue frame. They're so popular that they can't keep up with the demand!"

PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO (MAIN PIC, POTS)/ RANDY LARCOMBE (SOPHIE)



"I have an old copper by the front door where I keep things in regular use, such as my hand hoe and my favourite gloves of the moment" *sophie*



the good gardener

Rusty tools, a pile of mismatched gardening gloves, safety gear that's too hard to find so you don't bother. Sound familiar? We all have our dirty secrets, but with a few simple tips you can clean up your act

Storing gloves

Peg gloves on a piece of string by the open end to keep spiders out and for easy access. Or you could keep all your gloves in a woven basket lined with paper towels to soak up moisture, and place it near the door so they're easy to grab when you need them.

Cleaning tools

If you're the kind of gardener that tends to dump and run at the end of the day, store a few rags and some oil on the shelf where you keep your hand tools and give them a quick rub over before you put them away. To maintain wooden handles use boiled linseed oil.

Using safety gear

The best way to make sure you use safety equipment is to store it next to the items you'll use it with. Safety glasses and earmuffs go next to the hedge trimmer and leaf vac, along with transformers and power cords; and dust mask and gloves next to potting mix.

PHOTOS GAP PHOTOS (GLOVES)/VINCENT LONG (MICHAEL)/GLADIATOR GARAGEWORKS (1800 452 342) (STORAGE)

Laundries, balconies and smaller spaces

When you're short on space, a laundry's a good spot for storing gardening items, and the laundry tub is handy for quick clean-ups. Of course, where there's water there's humidity, so you'll need to protect your tools from rust. Before you put them away, clean metal tools and give them a wipe over with oil. Place them in transparent plastic shoeboxes and label them if necessary. Stack in a cupboard or display on open shelves.

If your gardening is limited to pots on the balcony, find a way to keep your tools, gloves and potting mix out of the rain and out of sight. One great idea is to use a large, hinged storage box that doubles as a seat. Keep a brush and pan in there for potting mix spills.

more storage options
Storage crates

If you want a storage solution that's easy to stack, use semi-transparent plastic storage crates. Gardening guru Michael McCoy, who is (in his words) "the most disorganised gardener south of the Tropic of Capricorn", reckons they're the best thing ever. "They're stable when stacked, which means you hardly need any shelving, and you can kind of see what's in them at all times."

They're cheap at discount stores, but Michael thinks it's worth paying a bit

extra. "Buy decent quality ones from a supplier that will continue to stock them as your needs increase, as crates need to be identical to stack properly."

Enclosed cupboards

If you're a neat freak or at least aiming for the appearance of calm, cupboards can hide a multitude of storage solutions (or sins) in any size space. If you have little ones around, add a lock to keep any chemicals out of reach.

Buckets, caddies and tubs

Buckets, caddies and tubs are great for small hand tools in any space. Keep like with like in different buckets so you can pull out one container for a particular job. Sophie Thomson uses a wooden tradesman's tool caddy to store all her irrigation bits and pieces, including dripper heads, coils of soft spaghetti line, clamps and a pair of multigrips for the clamps. Use tubs to keep open shelves in check; and put them on the lowest hard-to-access shelves, so you can lift them out to rummage through.

Then there are the tools you often use in the garden. Keep your favourite ones in a canvas caddy for regular jobs such as weeding. Stock it with secateurs, trowel and gloves (add your keys and water bottle when you head out) and store it near your sunscreen, gardening hat and kneeling pad. **GA**

when good sheds go bad

Think your shed is a mess? Don't worry, professional organiser Georgie Rees has probably seen worse!

"There was the double garage that was so full it didn't fit a car! Even if the owners knew what was in there, they couldn't get to it. Once we had culled things, I suggested using shelves to create aisles to allow access.

"Then there was the shed the cat lived in at night. The stench was unbearable and cat hair was everywhere. After cleaning it up and making more space, we got rid of all the plastic boxes and empty containers and made a defined area for the kitty litter tray and another for the cat to sleep in."

✦ To call in the experts, visit the Australasian Association of Professional Organisers at aapo.org.au and search for an organiser in your area.



"I use plastic storage boxes as mini-glasshouses - they're fabulous containers for pots of seedlings that I need to bring in at night and put out during the day. I really love those things" michael

plan of attack

Professional organiser Georgie Rees shares her five-step plan to create your dream shed

- 1 Move everything out and clean the area** If you think you'll run out of time or there's just too much stuff, tackle one small area at a time, so you can see what you've achieved and stay motivated.
- 2 Place similar items together** Having one area for each purpose (spraying, pruning, weeding) makes it easier to find your tools when you need them (and put them back when you're done).
- 3 Label boxes or containers** There's no need to turn your garage upside down every time you need something - there's an easier way. Label boxes so you can see what's in them at a glance.
- 4 Get rid of rubbish before you're tempted to put it back** Time your clean-up so it coincides with a council pick-up or chemical collection day. Recycle what you can (see recyclingnearyou.com.au) but try to be realistic: if it's broken, damaged or old, consider if anyone else will want it either. If the answer's no, then chuck it out.
- 5 Bask in the glow of your organised space!** Enjoy your rejuvenated space and return things to their new spots after gardening.

Sort-out WARNING
"The mess may get worse before it gets better"
Georgie Rees

