



# The North Carolina Journal for Women

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**April 2004**



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[Cyndy Ratcliffe](#)

## The Garage

As the weather warms up there is a strong desire to start up the grill, dig in the garden and get out the summer games. Often this requires digging items out of the overloaded garage. **The job of organizing the garage can be an overwhelming one.** After all, this area is out of public view and we tend to fill it up quickly, and without a lot of thought to placement or neatness. **Select one area at a time to work on**, keeping in mind that it doesn't all have to be done in a day.

**Start off with having the tools you need to simplify the process:**

1. Boxes for "Give away"
2. A Box for "Repair"
3. Bags (large ones) for "garbage".

**Step One:** Think in terms of "**categories**". You may have any of the following categories: Gardening, Sports, Workbench, Pets, Christmas, Cleaning, Painting/Staining, or Camping.

**Resist the temptation to purchase organizing bins** and hooks until you have sorted the items into their categories.

**Step Two:** Select one small section of the garage and **begin sorting, item by item.** Determine what needs to be kept and the category that each item falls into. To determine if any item is to be kept ask yourself 3 questions: **Do I use it? Do I need it? Do I love it?** If you answer no to all three questions then it goes in the "give away" box, or the garbage! If you want to keep an item, but it needs to be repaired, place it in the "repair" box. **Eighty percent of what you think you may need in the future you will not.** As you determine the items that you are keeping sort them into their category. When you have completed the sorting process take your "repair" box to the car to deliver the items to be repaired. Do the same with your "give away" boxes in order to get them to your favorite charity.

**Step Three:** Clear any remaining items in the garage then sweep and wash it down.

**Step Four: Set up "zones" in the garage.** A zone is simply an established location to store one particular category. Determine the best location for each of your zones keeping convenience and practicality in mind. **The garden zone should be near the garage door closest to the outdoors.** The zone by the door leading into the house should have items you need to use in the house regularly. **Keep simplicity and ease of use in mind as you make your storage decisions.** The fewer steps involved in putting an item away, the more likely all family members are to do it. Utilize open containers without lids where possible, allowing family members to simply "toss" an item back into its location. **Anything on a peg hook requires just one simple action.** For example, a dog leash stored in a drawer requires an individual to pull the drawer open, roll up the leash, place it in the drawer and then close the drawer. If we simply have a hook for the leash, all we do is hang the leash. **A pegboard achieves the same results.** Outline the items you have placed on the board with a permanent marker for repeated identification (this is called shadowing). Keep small children in mind when placing the items on the board, they should be able to reach what

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they need, but not sharp tools. Large items such as brooms should have the heads alternating on the board for better use of the space.

Getting as much as possible off the floor is another important goal in organizing the garage. **Recognize how much wall space is available and utilize shelving, pegboard, tool racks** or hanging brackets to store anything you can on the walls. Items as large as bicycles, lawn chairs, push brooms, and ladders can take up a lot of floor space, but all of them can also be stored on the wall. **Look overhead into the rafters**; this is a great storage spaces for ski's or any long flat items that are not used regularly.

When deciding on shelving keep in mind that wire shelving allows dust to fall through the shelves whereas full board shelving collects the dust.

If you end up having to **stack numerous boxes on top of each other**, realize that retrieving the one on the bottom requires moving all those on top. Instead, **use a shelving unit and put each box on a shelf above the other**. When you need the bottom box it is simple to take it off the shelf without moving any others. Be sure any boxes you use in the garage will **hold up in the heat and humidity of North Carolina**. Many boxes are created for just this purpose and are found in office supply stores. A great way to label these boxes is with the clear CD pockets that you can purchase at any office supply store. They have a peel off sticky side and a clear vinyl "window" for the label.

**Small, galvanized steel cans work great to contain dog food**, cleaning rags or sand for cleaning up grease spills. Put the can on wheels for more ease of use.

Well, that is it! A little planning, organizing and installing and you have a garage to be proud of, heck you may want to leave the door open just to show it off!



As a Professional Organizer, Cyndy Ratcliffe works with home and small business owners to clear their clutter and organize what is important. She assists individuals to reduce stress, boost their image, and be more productive through her speaking, teaching, and hands-on coaching of

organizing techniques.

She received her bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Ashland University in Ohio and was a senior-level manager for over 20 years supervising 130 retail stores before launching Organizing Solutions, Inc.

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