

The following are excerpts from recent articles written about
[garage organizing and garage lifestyle trends.](#)

Garages Go Upscale: More Space For Storage and Maybe Your Cars

By Amir Efrati

From The Wall Street Journal Online

The latest addition to Leigh and Carrie Munsell's home in Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., has granite-like flooring, cedar-lined cabinets and pricey recessed lighting. An elegant new pantry? A library? No -- a \$20,000-plus bespoke storage space in the couple's two-car garage.

With everything from fly-fishing gear to clothes now arranged in an orderly way, the garage is "pristine," says Mrs. Munsell, 41, a stay-at-home mom. "No cars are allowed."

Aiming for the high-end homeowner with a glut of stuff, garage specialists around the country are urging customers to invest in storage space as refined as the rest of their home. Ranging up to 500 square feet, the spaces are typically created along garage walls, often with weatherproof cabinetry in woods like maple and birch. In some cases, cabinets are hung on slatwalls, or storage platforms are installed above the cars.

... According to the National Association of Home Builders, 19% of single-family homes constructed in 2004 had room for three or more cars, up from 11% in 1992. Because a third of two-car garages have so much stuff in them that there's room for only one car, according to a 1994 survey by the Department of Energy, garage shops are betting that, with more space, homeowners will stockpile more stuff -- and need more organized storage.

Garage Envy Hits Fashionable Homeowners

By June Fletcher

From The Wall Street Journal Online

Oct. 18, 2000 -- The garage at Shaquille O'Neal's mansion in Orlando, Fla., is bigger than most houses. At 5,000 square feet, it not only fits 10 cars, but has a movie theater, a lounge, two bathrooms -- and wall-to-wall carpeting.

... About 180,000, or 16%, of new homes built in 1998 had a three-car garage or bigger, compared with 12% in 1993, according to the National Association of Home Builders. Baird Homes Inc., a Tucson, Ariz., developer, says one out of 10 buyers now selects a six-car garage, even though -- at 1,400 square feet -- the garages are almost as big as the homes themselves. Toll Brothers Inc., another big developer, says three-car garages are standard in its upscale homes, except in automobile-obsessed Southern California, where four-car garages are standard.

... many people are "getting wealthier younger," says architect Chris Lessard of Great Falls, Va. -- who is building a four-car garage for his three cars -- and simply have more stuff than their parents did at a similar age. For another, at a time when new developments are overflowing with immense, largely indistinguishable dwellings, the garage is one of the few places where homeowners can do something visibly unique.

... In fact, builders and real-estate agents are discovering that a big garage is a big draw to some buyers. In a survey of 1,500 recent home buyers by John Schleimer, a housing-market analyst based in Roseville, Calif., many people cited a cramped garage as one of their previous home's biggest flaws and said they moved partly to get more parking bays.

... Of course, one reason people want bigger garages is that they are running out of places to put their ever-expanding collections of stuff. It isn't just cars -- though with the rise of blended and extended families, those are proliferating, too -- it's also personal watercraft, sports equipment, garden tools and all the other souvenirs of prolonged prosperity. The American Moving and Storage Association says that in 1995, the average family carted 7,262 pounds of belongings when they moved, compared with 5,645 pounds in 1977. Since it isn't possible to stick the riding mower in the attic or basement, that leaves the garage.

Garages Motor To New Heights **By Craig Wilson, USA TODAY**

Carl Zinn, a real estate developer from Shorewood, Minn., didn't realize something as simple as a garage could make him so happy.

But it has. Not that his is that simple.

Zinn just added a three-car garage to his 1950 home and tricked out the addition with first-rate windows and organizational units. His skis and fishing equipment hang so beautifully on the walls that he calls them "garage art."

"Turns out the garage is my favorite room in the house now," says Zinn, who threw an Oktoberfest party for a crowd of 80 in the three bays last year. "And I just (put) a flat-screen TV out there, too. ... When I'm working on my boats and have the music on and a glass of wine, I'm a happy man."



The garage, that once dusty and cluttered retreat where millions of men used to hang out among Maxwell House coffee cans filled with nails, is where it's all happening in the American home.

... "The average American two-car garage had become the no-car garage. Ironically, the room in the house that has its door open to the world every day is the most unsightly. It's the family dumping ground, the place to put something we don't know what to do with."

And the problem only gets worse as the "dumping ground" increases in size. According to the National Association of Home Builders, there are 65 million garages in the USA, and demand for bigger ones is growing daily: Even four-car garages are becoming commonplace.

Helping homeowners deal with all this space are more than 500 organizing businesses that specialize in garages, twice as many as in 2000, according to the National Association of Professional Organizers. Organization products in general are now an \$800-million-a-year industry.

"We did the home theaters, the custom kitchens, the glamour baths," says Todd Starr of Gladiator GarageWorks, a 4-year-old Whirlpool brand in Benton Harbor, Mich. "So what was left? The garage. It's been the junk drawer of the home for years."

When Whirlpool dispatched graduate students in anthropology to study garages and how they're used, "we found there are dozens of uses," Starr says. "From parking the car to woodworking to just sitting in a lawn chair, smoking a cigar and listening to the ballgame on the radio."

And while it's possible to spend tens of thousands of dollars redoing the garage, the good news is it can be done for a lot less. Home Depot reports the average garage makeover purchase runs about \$500.

... Julie Morgenstern, author of *Organizing from the Inside Out*, says there are a couple of reasons for this newfound love affair with the garage. The need to get our acts together. And money.

There's a trend toward "lightening up," she says. "We want to feel more buoyant.

"And it's real estate, the best investment we have these days."

Zinn, the Minnesota real estate developer, knows this from experience. Money spent on kitchens, bathrooms and garages, he says, you'll get back. But real estate benefits aside, the garage benefits everyone.

"It's not just a guy thing," says Zinn. "My wife loves it. It's neat. It's clean. It looks nice."

In fact, it's becoming as much a living space as the den.

"What people are doing is extending the style of their home into the garage," says Doug Arndt of The Complete Garage in Minneapolis, a 5-year-old garage organization company with 17 outlets in 10 states. He did Zinn's garage. "So we tailor the garage to suit their lifestyle."

Remodelers Seek Refuge By Focusing on Garages

By Jeff Zaslow

From The Wall Street Journal Online

In the last few weeks, Wally Fisk has been spending a lot of time in his new garage. And why not? It has oak floors and room for five television sets, not to mention a ceramics workshop, an archery range and his prize 1932 Gar Wood speedboat. Oh, he has cars in there, too.

"My garage feels like home," says the retired construction-equipment maker, who actually spent Sept. 11 sitting in his boat watching the news.

... Then there is the question of where to put all the stuff that accumulates in garages -- lawn mowers, old refrigerators, boxes of clothes, unused exercise equipment. That problem has given birth to a whole garage-storage industry peddling everything from a pair of \$12 "MultiStor" hanging brackets for lawn chairs and wheelbarrows to a \$6,000 GarageTek system, which creates a mezzanine storage level, plus a workbench, cabinets, tool holders and 600 square feet of wall paneling. "Garage organization is now where closet organization was 20 years ago," says Marc Shuman, GarageTek's president.

... many suburbanites continue to want a big box, not just for parking, but for all their junk. That's why almost 17% of new homes built last year had garages that could fit three or more cars, up from 12% in 1993, according to the National Association of Homebuilders. For people who still can't squeeze their cars in among the excess stuff, Bill West, a Fort Collins, Colo., real-estate agent, has published "Your Garagenous Zone," a book filled with such garage advice as, "if it's on the floor, it's time to store." Among his recommendations: steel mesh affixed to the ceiling for heavy objects such as snow tires and display boards like the ones retailers use for hanging items.

The fact is, once people have redone the kitchen and the bath, there isn't much of the house left to redo, making the garage a prime target for the remodeling industry. Older baby boomers are "finishing up inside their homes and moving on" to the garage, says Greg Alford of the Peachtree Consulting Group, of Atlanta, which recently studied Americans' garage spending.

Reclaiming the Garage

Homeowners reevaluate their garages for solutions to cleaning up the clutter that has invaded their homes

By Jon Minnick Qualified Remodelers Magazine

Homeowners are looking to make the most of their home and the space it contains. Basements, for example, are no longer looked at as dank storage areas, but areas for potential living space. Now garages are in homeowners' sights. Whether all the basement storage has been taken over from redevelopment into entertainment areas or because the home lacks any real storage space, the focus on the garage has become the next big thing to hit the home.

“Garages are mainly used for storage these days and not for cars,” says Michele Savalox, senior marketing manager for Gladiator GarageWorks. “Garages have not only become the junk drawers of the home, but also the main entryway, which is increasing the need to organize the space.”

According to NAHB research, only 17 percent of homes built in 2005 didn't include a garage. Sixty percent of homes built in that same year included a two-car garage and 15 percent included a three-or-more car garage. These figures give an idea of the potential pool of customers remodelers can look forward to that may be interested in some sort of garage organization system right now or in the near future.

“Garages are getting bigger,” says Gopal Ahluwalia, NAHB's staff vice president for research. “The garage standard used to be 20 by 20 ft. and now tends to be 24 by 24 ft. because homeowners want the extra space. Primarily they want the extra space for storage.”

Out of the 72.2 million owner-occupied homes in the United States, 54.7 million or 76 percent of those homes contain a garage. But what home-owners are doing with their garages is a different story.

“We are becoming a more and more casual society,” says Jim Schlimpert, owner of Garage Storage Cabinets. “People are coming and going through their garage and need them to look better because of this.”

Organized mess

“People are moving toward organizing,” says Schlimpert. “If you look back to the '20s and '30s there really weren't any cabinets in kitchens. But look at kitchens now, homeowners are trying to get the most out of their space.”

Schlimpert suggests these three steps to get started in organizing the garage. First, take the measurements. This physical analysis of the space helps the homeowner understand what they're working with and what will be possible for them to do. Second, the psychological profile of the inhabitants should be worked up. This involves figuring out their likes and dislikes, hobbies, sports and what they are trying to accomplish with the organization.

“There’s one key question to ask a homeowner,” says Schlimpert. “What treasures do you want to get off the floor and behind the door?”

Lastly, a remodeler should combine the first two evaluations and look at the options available to make up a plan for the space that will accomplish the homeowner’s goals.

“Homeowners are using garages mainly for storage and not for cars,” says Savalox. “They want an organized look that includes work space, crafting/project stations, kids stations and a still have room to park the car.”

What’s next

The future of garage organization is only getting brighter. Companies that have some focus on the garage have seen real growth as homeowners look to utilize their space and redesign the way they use it.

Companies fixated on garage organization continue to add innovative products to their offering to help homeowners manage their time and space. Ceiling track and lift systems to store products “off the ground” will be making a bigger appearance.

“Garage organization is a relatively new revolutionary idea,” says Schlimpert. “It’s the final frontier of the home.”

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