

Garage sales take planning, but will clean out clutter

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BARGAINS | CALGARY — Casually walking through your favourite home store, you spot it.

It's exactly the lamp you've been looking for — the right shape, size, colour and it's even a reasonable price. Or, maybe it's the perfect pillow, art or an armchair you spy.

Whatever it is, you're hooked, but you know it's not in the budget or you already have a house bursting at the seams.

But there is a way to find the space and funds for that hot new object — host a yard or garage sale.

Such a sale allows you to get rid of what you don't want, make room for new pieces that can refresh a decor and produce the funds to buy the new pieces you really want.

Here's expert advice to make your sale a success:

- Advertise the sale, especially if your neighbourhood doesn't get a lot of traffic. If you are unsure of what to say in your ad, read some to see what would appeal to you as a buyer. Ask your neighbours if they want to split the cost of a newspaper ad and hold a multi-family event. Shoppers are more likely to hit a sale when they know other ones are near.

- Good signs are vital. Check out the many professional and eye-catching sale signs that are waterproof and reusable. They make a sale appear more appealing and will work even if you're hit by wind or rain. Be aware there are bylaws regarding signage and promptly take down your signs as soon as your sale is over.

- If you make your own signs, drawing arrows on them helps. Use sturdy cardboard and make the sign legible. After the signs are up, drive past them and see if you can read them easily, because if you can't, nobody else can either. It's helpful to have your signs look similar (same coloured lettering and coloured cardboard). That way, when people are following your signs, they'll wind up following only your signs and not be distracted by other sales.

- Put prices on everything, and on the top of items, not on the bottom. It's a lot of work, but worth it because you won't have people asking every two minutes how much you want for something. As a general rule of thumb, price items about a third of what they would cost new, but try to look at your stuff objectively.

Clothing is the worst to try and sell, and has to be marked very low to move at all.

- Put some effort into it. Make items as attractive as they can be. If the first thing that someone picks up is nasty and dirty, it may turn them off looking at other things. If you are selling an old basketball, make sure it is full of air. If you are selling a TV, have it turned on.

Garage sales are more relaxing if there is background music. That allows customers to discuss potential purchases privately with their shopping partners, without feeling like they have to whisper.

Display some of the more interesting items at the end of your driveway to act as a magnet to lure people in. Have something that appeals to men at the front (power tools, weights or electronics) so that they'll be more likely to pull over, if they're driving, when a wife or girlfriend points to the sale.

- Put away items you don't want to sell. If you don't, that will be the one item the buyer wants.