Tips for Cleaning and Organizing Your Garage by Justin Karmie

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For many of us, our garage is the last place we care to keep clean or organize. The leaves will always blow in, the salt will be tracked in along with the gravel from the street, and it's simply not worth the effort. When you've got more important things to worry about, like picking the kids up from soccer practice, and making sure that your lab coat stays pristine white, and that the kids' laundry gets done and dinner's on the table, the garage tends to get neglected. It's alright - we've all been there. The garage isn't the prettiest place of the home, but it's also not exactly an overused space. For most people, it's the place where they throw everything: the sleds, the snow shovels, the cars, the large trash can with a tight lid to keep out tiny predators, the garden tools, the skis and more. We pile things in our garage and then, it gets so crowded that we forget we have them. Summer comes along, and we're looking for the beach chairs, and we can't find them - they're buried under a pile of winter gear and for all intents and purposes, they're long gone. Then winter comes, and a big storm strikes before we're prepared, and suddenly, we're digging through the storage boxes to find the winter coats and the snow boots, the ski pants and the shovels. Getting the snow blower out without damaging something else in its way? Forget about it. For most of us, the need to take care of our home (the inside of it, at least) means the storage and cleaning and organization of our garages falls by the wayside. It's the last place we look to clean, the last place on our list - and for good reasonâ€¦but what if cleaning and organizing your garage was as simple as a few tips and some great storage solutions? What if your garage wasn't the last standing eyesore of your home? What if it was genuinely beautiful, if it was a garage that elicited stares of jealously and the occasional "ooh and ahh" from the neighbors? That'd be something to smile about, wouldn't it? Go on, get ahead of your spring cleaning and get your garage in tip top shape. Here are tips to help you do so.

With any big cleaning project, the first step is to clear things out. You've got to go through what you still need and use, and what you don't. Grab the family and set aside a Saturday afternoon to pull the cars out and park them on the driveway, and tackle the garage mess together. Get all the clutter out of the way, so you can see what you've actually got - and then decide what you'll keep and what you want. Sort your things into three piles: keep, donate, and throw away. This is a professional organizer's tip - you always want to sort before you do a big clean and reorganization project. You'd be surprised how much space you have once you get rid of the things you're no longer using. If it's not in terrible shape, don't throw it out! Donate it to a local school, or local homeless shelter. You can even list items on Craigslist. There's no reason to throw out something in good condition. One person's trash is, after all, another person's treasure. Maybe you don't use those sleds now that your kids are grown, but some children at the local homeless shelter would love to take a ride or two on those sleds. Help others benefit from your things, and you'll be doing a good deed while you prettify your garage.

Once everything's been cleaned out, donated, and sorted, it's time to clean. That's right, you've got to clean. Since the garage is bound to get quite dirty, the best option is to clear the floor, sweep it well, and then give it a good cleaning. Once it's clean, consider painting it with a coat of outdoor waterproof paint - that'll help keep stains and leakage from your cars out of the way, and will make it easier to clean in the future. Once you've done this, you can start to move your things back in - but before you do so, invest in some storage and organization tools! Got a lot of fishing supplies that have long been shoved in a corner? Snag a wood fishing rod rack, and get organized! A rolling rack can store up to twelve rods securely upright. The bottom drawer, meanwhile, organizes your lures and supplies, and a side pocket and handy hooks keep all your gear ready to go. Keep everything in one place, and your next fishing trip will be a cinch! Also consider tool holders, utility cabinets, and ceiling storage. Make the most of your space. You won't regret it.

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