

KINGMAN IS GROWING! Column

Get Ready, Get Set, Get Organized!

By **Marge Grimes**, Kingman Area Master Gardener

The heat of the summer has gone. The need to maintain your garden daily, or even several times a day, is over. The days are shorter and so is your to-do list. Now is the perfect time to organize your garden gear.

Before you begin to tidy your gardening storage space, look around the area you use now and get rid of everything you don't use, love, or need. Broken tools, empty plant containers, sun-baked hoses - they all must go. After that, decide what you can donate to a friend, neighbor, or local charity. This is the hardest part of organizing. You must be quick. If you stop to think, you'll keep the item. Once you've eliminated what you truly do not need, organizing what is left will be easy.

If you cannot bear to get rid of old tools, use them as garden art. Broken shovels, bent rakes, aged wheelbarrows can become garden sculptures. You still have them and you can look at them and remember who gave them to you, or the large job that ruined the tool, or the many times you used the tool. But the important thing is that it is not taking up storage space.

Now you are ready to find a home for everything. Once each item has its own specific spot, you find you will put your gardening tools away happily.

You can put your gardening supplies in a garage, storage shed, or by the side of your house.

Plan where each thing should go by asking yourself which tools you use most often. Garden gloves? Trowel? Bucket? Those items should be most accessible, and the items you use infrequently or annually, such as vegetable cages, can be stored farther away.

If you use your spade frequently, store it on the end of the items. Put the wheelbarrow farther away if it is the least used garden item. Place heavy bags of potting soil on the ground. Keep chemicals up and away from children's and pet's reach.

Place similar things together so you can begin your chore quickly. One tip is to store your most-used hand tools in a bucket with a handle. In this way, you can grab the bucket and go straight to the garden without searching for what you need. Keep potting soil, plant food, seeds near each other so when you are inclined to pot or repot, everything is handy.

Once you have found a place for everything, label each area with a label maker or masking tape and magic marker. This way it is a visual reminder to put things back where they belong. You and anyone else who uses the gardening items are more apt to replace them.

Whatever size your area, large or small, inside or out, storing things vertically will save space and keep things visible. This also frees up floor space for larger items.

Hang a pegboard with hooks for long- and short-handled tools. You can put up plywood and attach broom holders so you can snap tool handles easily in place. Or you can simply use long screws in pairs and the tools can rest between them. Again, label each spot or trace the shape of each tool on the wall so you know immediately where each tool belongs.

If you don't have space to hang everything side by side, buy a small, upright garden storage rack with slots for holding long handles. Systems that attach to the wall are also an option. If you have concrete blocks around, stack a few on top of each other and place tool handles upright through the holes.

For storing smaller items, look in discount stores for clear, vinyl shoe holders that hang on the wall. They often have 20 clear pockets that can store everything from garden gloves to seeds to plant labels to garden shoes.

Containers around the house can be recycled for storing garden supplies. Coffee cans are always useful for storing items. Old baskets or buckets are functional for storage, too. Bulbs, vegetables, a ball of string is easily seen and accessible.

After you have organized your garden storage area, notice if anything continues to get lost, covered over, etc., and then find a solution immediately. You may not discover a problem until spring, but resolve now to fix the problem as soon as it occurs.

Is your shed getting trashy and dirty? Position a large garbage can where you can get to it easily.

Are you constantly losing your tools? Vow to stash the tools in your carry-everywhere tool tote, or paint the tool handles orange so you may see them from afar.

As your garden changes, your needs will change. Finding solutions right away will keep you on track. Soon you'll be wasting less time and spending more time in your garden, which is where you would rather be.

NOTE: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3RD KINGMAN AREA MASTER GARDENERS ARE HOLDING A “PROPERLY STAKING & PLANTING TREES” WORKSHOP, 10:00 A.M. TO 12:00 NOON, AT THE MOHAVE AGRICULTURAL CENTER, 101 E. BEALE STREET, KINGMAN. PLAN TO ATTEND!

For more information contact The University of Arizona Mohave County Cooperative Extension at 101 E. Beale Street, Suite A, Kingman or telephone 928-753-3788.

CONTACT: ROB GRUMBLES
Extension Agent, Agriculture
The University of Arizona
Mohave County Cooperative Extension
101 E Beale Street, Suite A
Kingman AZ 86401-5808
928 753-3788 / 928 753-1665 (f)
mohavece@cals.arizona.edu

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