

Make Room for *SPRING*

BY » Peter Eisenhauer

How about removing some clutter from your home to make room for spring? A spring clearing could help you enjoy the new season with renewed energy for fun, less stress and more convenience. We asked two local experts for some motivation and tips for sorting through your stuff, and making your home work better for you.

Cindy Greer is the owner of Transition With Care, an A+ Accredited senior move management company. “We think it’s important to make room for spring year round!” Greer said. “We are routinely preparing our clients for relocation to smaller houses, 55+ communities, and retirement communities in the Charlotte and Lake Norman area.” Greer notes that with the real estate market as hot as it is, people need to have a handle on their stuff if the home sells quickly. “We see homes selling within days, which really accelerates the transition process” Greer said.

Beyond the practical side of being prepared for a move, decluttering can have emotional benefits. “We work with a lot of empty nesters and see first-hand how the physical and emotional weight of our clients belongings lifts as we help them make sense of their stuff,” Greer said. “Whether you are making a move or not, we think it’s never too early OR too late to create that fresh spring feeling by decluttering your home. Donating to charity can be a very gratifying way to do this.”

Kim Wilhelm, owner of File the Pile, in Huntersville, agrees that spring is a great time for clearing things out. “For one thing, in April, after you have done your taxes, it’s a good time to file away all the past year’s paperwork.” The changing season also means you are going to be spending more time outdoors, Wilhelm points out, so it is a good time to tackle the garage. “Take an inventory of what’s in your garage,” Wilhelm said. “Put like items with like, sorting out what belongs to garden work, sports equipment, automobile.” Set aside anything that needs repair or replacement. Check if that fertilizer or seed is still good. Throw out the old, get new. For the items you still want and need, the next task is to “find a home for them.” That can mean putting things on shelves, whether built in wall-mounted units, or the free-standing five-shelf system which you can buy from a home improvement store. It is often best to have garden tools hanging on wall hooks. Smaller items should be kept in clear containers. “Put what you can in clear containers and label them,” Wilhelm advises. “You don’t have to get a fancy label-maker,” she said, “Just tape and a sharpie will do.”

Back in the house you might want to start with clothes. You’re going to be putting winter clothes away, so, again, Wilhelm says, take stock. Put like items together. How about all those sweaters? Any that are worn out? Maybe you didn’t wear one of them for a few seasons. “Why store things

you’re not going to use?” Wilhelm asks. “Did I wear this? Does it not bring me joy anymore? Then it’s time to sell or give it to someone else.” Look for duplicates, too. You don’t really need ten plain white t-shirts. If they are in good condition you can donate them or cut them up for use as cleaning rags. Clothes should also be stored in clear containers where possible.

Wilhelm approves of the new trend to use velvet hangers. “They are very popular for a reason,” she said. “Clothes don’t slide on them. They don’t dig into the sleeves. And they are more compact -- you can fit many more clothes in the same space.” Wilhelm recommends organizing the closet by types of clothes and using dividers between sections on a rack. These can be labeled to make it easier to find things and put them back in the right place.

Regarding footwear, Wilhelm says toss those old shoe boxes. You are better off using clear containers for those seldom-worn party shoes, and a wooden or cloth divider on the wall to keep your other shoes off the floor. A hanging shoe divider near the front door is also a good idea. What about the sock drawer? Separate winter socks from spring socks. Throw out socks with holes and those sad single socks that have somehow lost their partners. Use drawer dividers. Wilhelm likes the honeycomb style dividers for socks, you don’t even have to fold the pair, just poke one end of the pair of socks into a cell.

Your pantry is another area to look at. Take your inventory, dispose of expired goods, and consider donating duplicates that you won't be able to use before their expiry dates.

When organizing kitchen and pantry, Wilhelm says, it is best to keep the items used most often at eye-level, whereas that heavy mixer can go on a bottom or top shelf.

Finding a home for everything is important. And the junk drawer is not the answer, though Wilhelm says "Those are a lot of fun to clean out." The process again is to empty the drawer, sort like with like, and find a home for the items. You don't have to spend money on containers, either, you can often repurpose things like a cellphone box.

Wilhelm and Greer both point out that getting organized feels good, but the greatest gift to your future self is to maintain that organization.

Greer says "making this activity more of a routine part of life can take the drudgery out of decluttering." She advises that certain areas are especially prone to expanding year by year: bookshelves, closets (clothing, coat & linen), china and kitchen cabinets. "Don't overwhelm yourself," Greer said. "Just take it room by room. If something is broken -- toss it! If you haven't read, worn or used items in the last 2-3 years, consider donating them to a local charity, church, school or animal shelter." Keep a heavy duty trash bag in your closet year round for clothing donation, Greer advises. And keep a plastic bin in your garage for donation of bulky items. That way, once you decide to donate something, it has a place to go. ■



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