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Outdoor Storage – Stow or Stash

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Cooperative Extension Service

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OUTDOOR STORAGE — STOW OR STASH

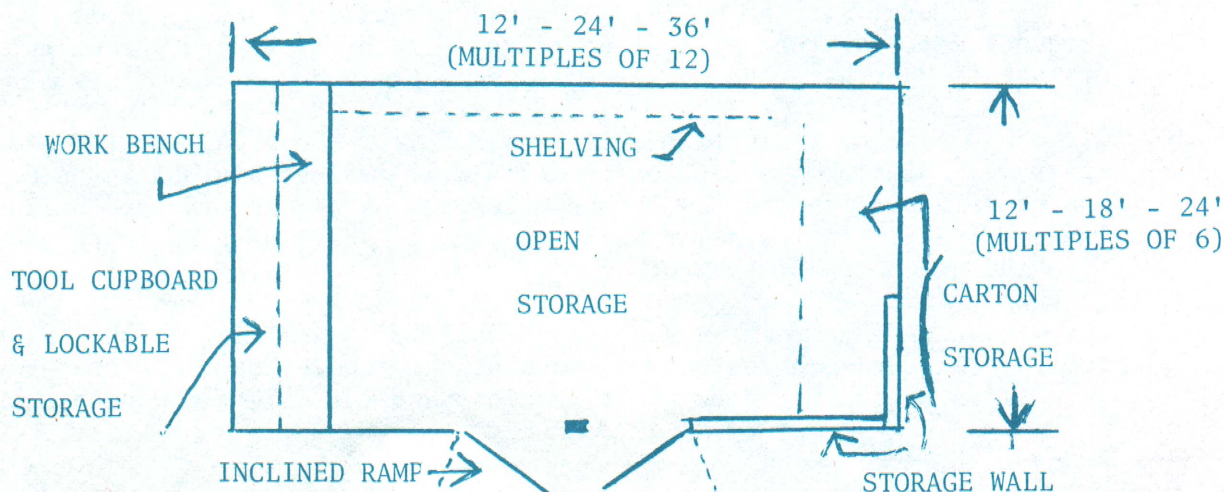
Storing landscape tools and lawn furniture from one season to the next can pose several very practical problems. It can also become a financial concern when we realize the replacement cost of equipment. Protecting equipment from the weather, theft and vandalism, while maintaining order and neatness, spurs continual interest in storage ideas.

There are many ways to store equipment. The items to be stored determine the kind of space needed; for example--can it be stacked, or must it all be stored on ground level space. Some items require protection from vandals, pests, humidity and freezing.

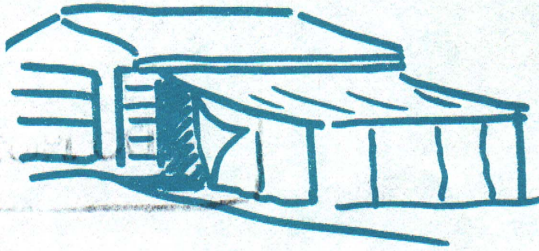
WHERE DO YOU PUT THEM?

From the former horse barn, at the far corner of the lot, to the attached garage near the street tells the story of outdoor storage changes in this century. In general, storage for cars and large moveable equipment today should not occupy a lot of space. On the average, however, it usually does occupy at least one-fourth of the total building area. This includes parking, garage, driveway and entrance. Still, some garages become cluttered collection points. Climbing over storm windows, snow plows, lawn mowers and an inflatable swimming pool to get to the car is very bad storage. It also threatens your well being!

One solution is to use all available surfaces. Make use of the interior walls of the garage. Exterior walls may be used too, if protected by an adequate overhead or outswinging door. This can make tools

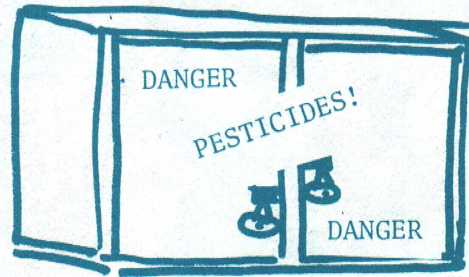


STORAGE BUILDING PLAN



TEMPORARY

"LEAN-TO"



SAFE

STORAGE

readily accessible. Shelving and a variety of cubicles (crates or corrugated cardboard boxes) can easily store objects of different sizes, shapes, weights and forms. Also, a lean-to type of structure saves space and material and may allow storage closer to actual work areas on the home property.

Basement garages are not usually suitable for storing volatile articles like fuel because odors from them can permeate the whole house.

Pesticide storage requires special precaution to protect users and children. A permanent installation with lockable doors is recommended. Certain chemicals should be kept safe from damage by excess moisture, cold or heat.

A tarpaulin provides good, temporary weather protection. It can be used on new equipment and to store plant and construction materials until they are put into permanent place in your landscape. If you have the materials, a temporary canvas or plastic lean-to may be suitable. However, you should first be aware of local building codes and subdivision or area building regulations.

A SEPARATE STRUCTURE

If you build a separate, permanent, storage building place it on a footing which extends below the frost line for stability and rodent protection (at least 3 feet deep). This type of building can house garden equipment, picnic tables, lawn furniture, patio umbrellas, spray equipment and other articles.

Metal storage buildings should be built of sturdy, well-trussed (braced) material that will stand heavy wind pressure and the weight of wet snow. Many have been observed to collapse under stress.

A separate storage unit should follow the architectural style of the home. Similar quality construction will reduce maintenance needs, and storage quality will be far superior to weak, mass produced buildings. In any case, it is unwise to build merely the shell of a building and then pile things on top of each other.

Consider roominess and adaptability of shelving to the extent possible in the size you build. As mentioned above, make use of the walls as well as the open floor. Allow ample space for larger equipment--easy

turning, loading and repair. Provide a work bench too, if there is room. Allow space for garbage cans, related equipment, and for fuel storage.

Chain saws and long-handled pruning saws have special storage requirements due to their size and weight. Long pieces of exterior wooden molding (for replacement on porches, used as garden stakes, clothes posts, tree braces and other long objects) should be stored away from rain but not necessarily inside a building. Install hooks or loops for these kinds of material under the eave overhang or over ceiling joists.

DON'T HOARD (EASIER SAID THAN DONE)

Don't keep things that you never use. Use your common sense to determine the most advantageous use of storage space. During periods of inflation some items may warrant storing for future expected use.

PROBLEMS OF DETERIORATION

Your storage structure should be basically as sound as your home, with footings below the frost line. Protect it from birds and other wild life, and from moisture, roof leakage and wind-blown rain.

If you're moving into a new neighborhood, ask the residents about their storage problems, especially as to the effect of weather. Profit by their successes and learn from their failures.

If you don't have an attached garage or an adequate detached garage, don't feel that you must relegate your storage space to the farthest corner of the lot. Any storage facility can be attractively concealed by a screen fence, evergreens or trees, trellises, hedges, painted or stained surfaces. This sort of concealment can become an attractive feature of your over-all landscape design--or you can let it become an eye-sore--for which you are forever making apologies!

VARIATIONS

A storage area may be located on a different level, from the first floor level, of the house. Then, it is important to have "straight-run", ramp access to the basement or other storage levels. You may need a "cleated ramp" if you must store equipment on a second story.

SAFETY

You can build-in safety and attractiveness in the same structure. Avoid hazards in providing space for repairs of home equipment and operation of larger motorized tools. Provide adequate space for easy and safe turning. And do install "color coded warnings" on dangerous materials like fuels, pesticides and power equipment.

Install doors and locks that will keep theft to an absolute minimum. Dead bolt locks are recommended. Windows in storage areas can invite burglars. Windows in doors can be broken and allow ready access to the inside knob. Reduce chance of theft and vandalism by keeping equipment under cover when not in use. Reduce safety hazards by planning for convenience and maneuverability.

You can't anticipate every possible accident or theft that may happen in your storage areas, so protect yourself and your property with an adequate insurance policy.

Safe storage protects your investment further by extending the useful life of your equipment. It will save you money in replacement costs, also in time and money spent on repairs.

YOUR PREFERENCES

Your own pattern of family activities will largely dictate the kinds of special storage to meet critical needs. Certainly, you can combine many types of storage under one roof. It can contain--besides lawn equipment--pet shelter and a hobby and craft center--garden produce too! To save on plumbing and electric wiring, connection to the storage building can be portable, leaving the main connections confined to the house. This should require the services of a professional electrician and/or plumber.

YOUR RESOURCES

There may be no limit to what you can include in a storage area. The only limitations are your needs and desires and the amount you can afford. But, remember--without wise planning, it is easy to get in over your head financially. In its own way, this kind of burden might offset all the advantages that you had hoped for in designing your ideal storage facility.

So, list your needs and desires.
Set your budget.
Plan the kind of storage you need!

By Joe Cox, Extension Specialist in Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture