

Life Styles

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A Place for Everything and Everything in its Place

Spring Cleaning a Home's Exterior Starts with Organization and Order

As spring reveals itself after a long winter so, too, does the need to begin outdoor chores for warmer weather. Just like spring cleaning inside the house, sprucing and rejuvenating lawns, gardens, garages, driveways and other exterior areas this time of year is a way to get organized and start anew.



Clean and Clutter-free

For homeowners, outdoor spring cleaning and chores involve utilizing the proper tools and equipment as well as creating an organized space in which to work. "By arranging and organizing outdoor spaces, homeowners will find they are able to efficiently utilize their exteriors, and more effectively use their time," says Warren Eley, vice president of sales and marketing for the Rapid Reel brand of hose reel products, which have been developed to simplify the use of garden, power wash, and air hoses. "With a little upfront organizational time and effort, homeowners can easily find and use their tools, equipment and outdoor products all season long."

To start, with a goal of creating spotless exterior areas, such as patios, walkways, garages, or decks with imbedded grime, pressure washing surfaces is an effective way to see immediate results with a fresh, clean look. However, for outdoor places that are coated in winter's left-over dust or early spring pollen, simply rinsing with a garden hose can do the trick.

For all its obvious purposes, cleaning notwithstanding, it seems no one tool is more useful for outdoor work than the garden hose. But, hoses can be awkward to lug around the landscape and difficult to store. An improperly stored hose can fall victim to kinks, tears and warps. If these troubles weren't enough, hoses can be difficult to wind and tend to unravel. "Properly storing a hose, and other tools and equipment, can allow for quick, easy access when they are needed often this spring," says Eley. And, a tidy exterior is

less likely to invite unwanted mishaps or accidents.

Eley's company has made a science out of helping homeowners find new ways to streamline outdoor chores. He and his brothers, who co-own Rapid Reel, design and manufacture hose reels for the primary purpose of making hose-use safer and more efficient. "We wanted to provide homeowners with a better means for using their hoses," says Eley. Wall reels mount easily to the side of a house or garage, and the hose easily winds and unwinds with the turn of a break-resistant crank handle. Other reels have two or four wheels alleviating the need to carry a hose from front to back yard.

Smart Space Utilization

Depending on the type of tool or piece of equipment, it makes sense to store some products out in the open in an organized fashion. With other tools, it is simply best to keep them in a shed or other enclosed storage space. The key is to know the difference and adhere to this throughout the season.

Those which are portable, such as garden tool caddies or Rapid Reel's 4-wheel Wagon Reel can be left outdoors for trouble-free transportation as they are needed. Though, fixed or mounted equipment such as 10- by 20-foot shelving units, standard-size cabinets or wall-mount hose reels, like the 150-foot Parallel or Perpendicular Wall Reel, are conveniently permanent to a particular locale. Setting up an apparatus like these allows for straightforward usage and the benefit of additional floor, deck or garage space.

By adding a pegboard for wall-mounting tools, handheld gear can often be affixed to a surface in a less permanent fashion and can be relocated to another area at a later date, if desired. Pruners, pliers, and other small utensils are often made with a handle, so Eley recommends hang-storing them as a means of additional organization. By grouping all long-handled tools, such as outdoor rakes, brooms and mops, in one storage area, the space is maximized in an orderly fashion.

"Storage based upon size, type and shape often results in smart space utilization and the down-sizing of unnecessary items," says Eley. After exterior home projects have been accomplished, there is no guesswork as to where to situate the tools. In addition, long-handled equipment will not be left pointing into walkways, and hoses will no longer be unattended coils waiting to trip passersby.

Gear Up and Go

Once a space is prepped and cleaned, and tools and equipment have found a new home in an organized location, a schedule of outdoor cleaning and maintenance is helpful. Given busy schedules during the warmer seasons, there may not be ample time to scrub down play sets, grills and outdoor furnishings every weekend. Along the same lines, keeping garage doors, driveways, and hardscapes free of debris may be a consuming activity. Eley suggests creating a rotating schedule for keeping the exterior in tip-top shape such as alternating specific tasks every other week and month.

Investing in durable, reliable home and garden equipment is essential as it will help avoid inefficiencies caused by broken or faulty items. Proper care can protect this investment and prolong the life of the equipment for years to come. Keeping certain tools and gadgets properly stored allows them to remain in pristine condition and easily found and used when they are in need. Home improvement and maintenance are foundational upon order and sequence, so avoid disarray and spring cleaning of the home's exterior can yield results that are clean as a whistle.

To learn more about Rapid Reel and the company's garden, power wash, and air hose reel options, log onto www.rapidreel.com.

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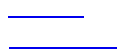
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