

Trash or Treasure?

How a weekend of garage sale-ing can help to decorate your home

by Lori Welch

I love my new home. I love to shop. I love to shop for my new home. When I'm feeling free-spirited, I pick up my local paper and start scouting out yard sales, a.k.a. garage sales, tag sales, estate sales, moving sales or divorce sales. Basically, it's any venue where folks are tired of their stuff and want you to lug it home so they can make room for their new stuff.

I recently had the yard sale bug so I picked up the Post classifieds and plotted my strategy. Great—a moving sale and a multi-family sale within two miles of my house. Another multi-family sale in Old Town Alexandria, Va. Awesome. Maybe after that I'll trek over to Arlington.

Saturday

7:45 a.m. Headed to my first location. I see a fluorescent orange sign directing me to turn left. I arrive and pull up behind Toyota Highlander, also headed to sale. Three others arrive behind us. We rush past each other to scan tables of VHS tapes, lace doilies and planters. I grab hold of a planter. I decide that while the planter is a bargain for a dollar, I really don't need it and move on. **Total spent: 0**

8:18 a.m. On my way to the other sale, but wait—another sign. I whip a sharp left and pull up in front of a stylish bungalow. I hop out of the car and head for the merchandise. Is that Ms. Highlander over checking out the CD collection? Clearly she's a pro. I grab a great basket (50 cents) and some vintage tea towels (10 cents each). Is that a Brookstone chair massager? Two dollars? Sold. **Total spent: \$3**

8:26 a.m. Onto the next sale—but wait—more signs! I make two turns and I'm back in Delray, Va., for another moving sale. I spot two weed eaters which are a bargain at \$2.00 each. Both are missing the twine part, but surely it would be worth a trip to the hardware store. I decide on the Black & Decker, coax the owner down to \$1.00 and head out. "Come back in a week and buy the house," yells the owner as I pull away. **Total spent: \$1**

8:40 a.m. Finally on my way to multi-family sale when a green neon poster board with big block lettering catches my eye—I'm staying on course—oh, what's the harm in stopping? First treasure I spot, some wooden shutters. Very cool, but what would I do with them? I move towards the back and see a kids' pool. I don't need it, but surely someone I know does. Hmm. Back to the car. **Total spent: \$0**

8:46 a.m. Seriously on a mission to get to multi-family...but wait another sign! Make an illegal U-turn and—whatta-ya

Good Advice for Garage Salers

- Get there early in the day—the early bird gets the best loot!
- Take a lot of dollar bills and change. At yard sales, they don't take Mastercard or American Express, but they do take cash!
- Don't forget your ATM card just in case you spy a treasure priced just out of the amount you have with you.
- Print out maps for all yard sales you intend to visit and organize them by their proximity to each other.

Source: *Yard Sale Search*

know—there's Ms. Highlander. She does a driveby and keeps going. I see mostly kids' stuff and follow suit, but wait—three houses down—what's this? I quickly park and JACKPOT! The



Photo courtesy of Lori Welch

whole street is one big yard sale. First house is a bust, but second stop is gangbusters. I grab two matching chairs, a piano stool and a rocker. I start a pile. I pick up an awesome snowman platter and matching bowls and a set of three handmade ceramic bowls in jewel tones. **Total: \$26**

9:32 a.m. I think about heading into Old Town, but I cannot fit another thing into my car.

Total Day's expenditures: \$30

The Garage Sale-Ing Experience: Priceless

Do the pros do it? While I couldn't get anyone to admit to the Saturday morning chase, interior designer Susan Utley of Susan Utley Design Studio of Bethesda, Md., agrees that there are unique pieces out there. "If you're in the right neighborhood, you can walk away with some really decent stuff." Whether you're looking for the gently used or the one-of-a-kind, yard sales are quite the adventure and, in most cases, provide both savings and enjoyment. "It's totally worth it," says Sheila Goldman, principle of Goldman Design Group. "By going to the oddest places, you sometimes find the most perfect piece!"

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