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Hidden agenda

Give the old garden shed the heave-ho with our stylish ideas for storing all your outdoor stuff, from secateurs to sandpit toys

WORDS SHELLEY TUSTIN

THE PREFAB CORRUGATED-IRON

garden shed – once a staple feature of every backyard – is slowly being shunted out of the gate, making way for clever storage.

"Houses are often storage-poor, so you need to look outside and utilise whatever space you have," says Mark Curtis of Secret Gardens of Sydney. With just a little thought, you can transform your cluttered yard into an area where everything has its place.

If you're starting from scratch, think about how you can create a bespoke backyard that accommodates everything you'd like to stash outside. Mark recommends writing out a storage brief, drawing on everything you need to store and how you like to live. Pool equipment, for example, can easily gobble up your backyard; Mark estimates you'll need a floor space of at least 1200mm x 1200mm and suggests designing one unit for everything from the filter to the pool pony, as in this cupboard, designed by Secret Gardens of Sydney. >



PHOTOGRAPHY SECRET GARDENS OF SYDNEY, SECRETGARDENS.COM.AU

DECKING IDEAS

Make your deck work harder. Andrew Donnola of Smart Landscaping Solutions suggests that storage can be concealed beneath decking, accessed via a simple flip-up lid. Above ground, opt for bench seats with built-in storage. The simplest storage is open shelving – an easy option if the area is sheltered enough – or a lift-lid bench to house kids' plastic toys or anything else that can stand up to a bit of moisture.



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SHED CRED

A hard-wearing, hardworking garden shed, such as one from Colorbond, is certainly a handy thing to have, but there's no need for it to be the central focus. It can be tucked away in a discreet corner, hidden behind a screen or constructed to look like part of the setting. A shed, given the same finish as the fence against which it stands, will be much less obtrusive.

ALL-WEATHER WONDERS

Water is insidious, creeping into the smallest spaces and potentially ruining your possessions. “Waterproofing storage, unless it is a proper structure like a shed, can be tricky and expensive,” warns Richard Unsworth of Garden Life. Look for water-resistant materials, such as fibrocement sheeting, galvanised steel and plastic. Timber looks great, but needs maintenance and will swell and warp with a bit of moisture; most cabinetry will be made with a galvanised-steel skeleton, with timber overlaid. Waterproof bench-seat storage requires extra thought (and cash), but provides a handy place to stash outdoor cushions. **hb**