

## **HOSTING A SUCCESSFUL YARD SALE**

If your annual spring cleaning ritual has produced a mountain of unused and unwanted items, you may want to think twice before you simply toss them out. How about a yard sale to turn some of that "junk" into someone else's "treasure?"

Each weekend in spring and summer you'll find yard sales popping up in neighbourhoods everywhere. And, where there are yard sales, there are yard sale "junkies." For many people, scouring yard sales for a bargain on a Saturday morning is an art. Why not take advantage of that fact to make some cash off your cast-offs and have fun while you're at it.

The Ontario Real Estate Association and your local REALTOR® offer the following tips to host a successful yard sale:

First, settle on a date and time for your sale. Weekends are virtually universal for yard sales, and most run from 8 or 9 a.m. until 4 or 5 p.m. You'll also need to set a rain date, usually the next day if your sale is on a Saturday, or the following weekend if your date is Sunday.

Most sellers advertise by posting signs on lamp posts and hydro poles. This is a more effective way of letting people know you're open for business than you might suspect. Veteran buyers (see below for more) will scout a neighbourhood during the week looking for telltale flyers. Many of your customers will use this method.

Have someone present at all times. Theft is unlikely, but many sellers have learned the hard way that it does happen. Placing valuable items closer to your sales desk is a good idea.

Running out of change is also a problem that plagues many sales. As most of your transactions will involve small amounts, it never hurts to have \$50 or more in small bills and loonies and toonies at hand. Buyers will often stop at a bank machine before they come, so expect to get a lot of tens and twenties early in the day.

### **Think like a yard sale buyer**

The ability to deliver the kind of goods and service that buyers want is perhaps the most important factor in the success of your sale. There are a number of items that are always in high demand: art, antiques (even distressed pieces), furniture, appliances, electronic equipment, tools, and lately, computer games and accessories. If you have goods in any of these categories, mention them in your flyer or ad.

Surprisingly, many veteran yard salers are not interested in old clothing. Unless you've got something special to offer, you can expect to turn much of your old wardrobe over to charity.

As to pricing your goods, nothing turns away a potential buyer more than a price that is too high. You can always expect haggling, but most won't even bother if you price an old lamp at \$20, when similar items can be had for \$5. The best plan of action is to attend a few sales the week before, and find out the going prices.

How you physically place your goods can also make a big difference. Don't clutter up your yard, and make sure your items are separated by category. This is a great opportunity to be creative. For example, there is a mini-boom in memorabilia from the 50s, 60s and 70s. Believe it or not, the old Lava Lamp you consider trash, might be exactly what someone else is looking for.

Another good tip that will help make a sale is to offer free coffee to your visitors. A friendly face and a free cup of java can do wonders. Or if you want to get the kids involved, have them set up an old-fashioned lemonade stand and charge five cents a cup.

Depending on the type of items you're selling, you can expect to make as little as \$20 or as much as a couple of hundred.

Finally, the success of a yard sale is measured by the amount of additional space you have in your house after the yard sale is over, and the amount of money you make. Now you may be tempted to run out and purchase more items that will likely end up in your next yard sale. But, why not celebrate your success by spending the money on dinner at a nice restaurant for the family and whoever helped at the sale.

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