



<http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/article/20100801/LIFE08/8010308/-1/life08/Find-treasures-and-save-money>

Find treasures and save money

Yard sales draw bargain hunters, collectors and those seeking a 'greener' life

Abby Luby • For Living & Being • August 1, 2010

Americans are yard-sale crazed. Here in the Northeast, from early spring to late fall, used, unwanted items — from bracelets to refrigerators — pour out of our homes onto our front lawns and driveways. It's the extra stuff we don't need, don't use and don't want. It's also a quick way to make a buck.

Our motivation? For yard sale hounds, it runs the gamut from getting a bargain on that long, sought-after utensil to curiosity about what other people use in their homes.

At a recent estate sale on Scott Terrace in Poughkeepsie, you could peruse the entire contents inside a house. People emerged carrying bagfuls of small household items and clothes. One man hauled a dryer out of the basement. The sale was run by Karen Olson, who has been running estate and auction sales for the past 30 years.

"They will buy something they already have but the same item is a newer or better version. They also don't want to pay full price for things," Olson said.

Exiting the house on Scott Terrace was Betty Damiani, a substitute teacher, who spent \$4.25 on a bag of items including several pairs of shoes, plastic hangers and two pocketbooks. She was thrilled with her purchases.

"These shoes fit me just fine," she said.

On Damiani's heels was Liz Vilanti, who bought a pair of hedge clippers.

"I have two homes, one here and one out on Long Island. These are for yard work for the Long Island house," Vilanti said.

"It's a way for people to get rid of their stuff," said Maureen Bain, who was holding a yard sale outside her house on Milbank Street.

A few feet away, 4-year-old Andres Frank was wading through a menagerie of stuffed animals laid out on a large blanket. His father, Wade Frank, said he and his wife frequent yard sales to find things they needed.

"It's also fun to see what people have," Frank said.

At another yard sale on Meadow Lane, Jesus Jauregui and his wife were thumbing through a cluttered table of cookware.

"My wife likes to find kitchen tools at these yard sales," Jauregui said.

Yard and garage sales can also feed our inner "collector" as we seek those rare, offbeat items. A recent tag sale offered such incongruous items as an eye patch, an old compressor, a can of dry ice (for 10 cents) and a leather bag from Italy worth \$300 selling for a mere \$100. Olson said she's seen a full set of dentures for sale alongside eclectic book collections.

That one person's garbage is another person's treasure has become a professional mantra for some people such as Robert and Sue Smith. After years of being yard-sale enthusiasts, the Smiths started TagSaleMaps.com Trading Post three years ago. Located on Freedom Plains Road in Poughkeepsie, this store and community-based website sells mainly furniture and some smaller items such as books and jewelry.

Since the recession hit, Smith has seen a shift in the type of purchases at their store.

"People aren't buying the luxury items any more, but are looking for smaller, more affordable furniture.

They don't want the big hutches, they want things that are tall and skinny that they can store easily or that fit into smaller living spaces," Smith said.

Joann Groth, assistance manager at "The Barn" on Route 44 in Pleasant Valley says she has also noticed a change in buying activity. "The Barn" is a nonprofit organization that collects and donates items to ministries and groups helping the needy. It also sells used items in good condition.

"We were at a lull after Christmas, and not a lot of stuff was coming in," Groth said about the usual influx of donated items. "Now is our busy time of year and it usually picks up sooner than this."

Groth is seeing more young parents come in looking and buying items for infants and children, such as strollers, carriages, cribs and baby walkers.

"They come in spurts and the items go fast. This stuff is expensive at a regular store," Groth said.

Goodwill spokesman Alfred Vanderbilt said in general, there has been an increase in purchases in the stores, such as the one on Route 9 in Wappingers Falls.

"A dramatic uptick was very noticeable at the beginning of the recession," Vanderbilt said. "Families are clearly coming to buy clothing and items that sustain them, rather than isolated purchases."

Goodwill is known for selling "gently used clothing and small household goods."

Getting a good bang for your buck isn't the only reason for cruising the circuit of yard sales to buy used items. Olson said her customers are also conscious of being "green."

"I'm a huge advocate of recycling and being mindful of our environment," Olson said.

Smith feels the same about trashing reusable items.

"I grew up in a house my dad built and we always

went to the Dumpster for stuff," she said. "The Dumpster was called 'Land of the Free' and you could take whatever you wanted. I got the disease of collecting too much free stuff."

Smith has an aversion to seeing good, used stuff thrown out and had to convince her future husband, Robert, that recycling was worthwhile.

"When we were dating, he thought getting stuff out of a Dumpster was weird. Then he saw a perfectly good dresser thrown in the Dumpster. I had him right there."

According to studies by the Environmental Protection Agency, furniture accounts for more than nine million tons of waste in landfills nationwide. Tossed out is mostly conventional furniture made with cheap materials such as plywood and medium-density fiberboard; it gets junked mainly because it doesn't last. Unfortunately this ubiquitously sold furniture is made with formaldehyde, a slow poison leaching out into the landfill and the environment.

In the last few years, yard sales have found a new life on the Internet. One of the more popular, international sites is Freecycle, started by an environmental movement in Tuscon, Ariz., in 2003.

Freecycle's goal is keeping usable items out of landfills. The group matches up people looking for free items with people who want to get rid of the same items. Freecycle in Dutchess County has a very active website where members have to join and adhere to specific rules and Internet etiquette. People offer and look for anything from music CDs to bookcases, children's toys, coffee tables and mirrors.

A plethora of other "yard sale sites" promote the "how-tos" of yard sales, the do's and don'ts.

At yardsalequeen.com, leaving old yard sale signs up past the date is a big no-no, a bad habit that could send us down streets to an empty driveway. Craigslist.com is also a popular site for yard-sale advertisements that are listed geographically. If you're out of town and have Internet access, you could always find a tag sale.

Olson offers a few yard sale tips of her own, especially about buying used furniture: If you find something that is a solid wood construction and built to last a lifetime, it's a must-buy.

"You want something that is made preferably in America about 40 or 50 years ago," she said. "It's made much better than the stuff you get in the stores today. Make sure it's well built and grab it."

Other tipsters suggest looking for the real values so you don't get overwhelmed by the volume of stuff. Also, American-made items are better than imported ones.

"This is about quality of life and looking to save money," Olson said.

Abby Luby is a freelance writer in the Hudson Valley. She can be contacted at abbylu@abbylu.com



Four-year-old Andres Frank sifts through stuffed animals at a yard sale on Milbank Street in Poughkeepsie. Marian Thompson of Clinton Corners browses a yard sale last year in the Village of Rhinebeck. Jesus Jauregui was looking for kitchenware at a yard sale on Meadow Lane in Poughkeepsie. (Abby Luby/For Living & Being)