

WEEKEND 3: CLEANING THE GARAGE OR SHED, PORCH OR PATIO, AND WALKWAYS

- Remove all heavy, space-sucking yard and garden machinery—lawnmowers, lawn trimmers, snow blowers, and their friends—and park them outside.
- Get your organization on by putting out two boxes or crates, one marked Keep and one marked Toss, in a central location. Then go through the garage or shed, looking for anything that's broken, items you no longer need, or stuff you can't figure out the origins of (like that weird, plastic-topped screw you found on the floor of the garage that doesn't seem to be part of anything you own), and put them in the Toss box. Any items that you need but just need to be reorganized can go in the Keep box. Once you're done, find permanent places for the latter. Garage organization might just be our least favorite spring cleaning task, but it's necessary to prevent the slow creep of hardware hoarding, so we always do it as early as possible.
- Once the floor and countertops are as clear of clutter as possible, it's time to clean out a year's worth of dirt, dust, pebbles, and other stuff we don't want to think about. For this chore, Annie loves her Ridgid 14-gallon wet/dry vac with leaf blower attachment. She fires it up, and the garage is dirt-free in about 20 minutes' time. Repark your yard and garden machinery, and you're good to go.
- Remove any furniture and indoor/outdoor rugs from the porch or patio, and repeat the leaf-blowing extravaganza. (You could sweep instead, but let's face it: power tools make spring cleaning a whole lot more fun.) Walkways can be cleaned the same way.
- Give your indoor/outdoor rugs a thorough cleaning by following our easy how-to.
- Remove any dust, cobwebs, or animal poo from your yard furniture or furniture and accessory covers with a stiff-bristled brush or broom. Hose down the furniture and covers, then give everything a good scrubbing with your favorite eco-friendly detergent or a 2:1 solution of water and white vinegar. If mildew or mold has been building up for a few months, give it a shot of bleach and let it sit in the sun for about 30 minutes; then scrub, rinse, and allow to dry before putting them back in place.

We hope these spring cleaning tips make a decidedly unglamorous job just a little bit easier. Got your own tips that make the process a breeze? Share them in the comments.