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Bargains Can Be Found On Pricey Goods

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Dom Perignon for \$5 a bottle? The notion that treasures can be lurking in someone's garage makes yard sales downright addicting for some.

My Home

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Where else can you avoid the risk of a credit card binge while impulse shopping?

Shelley Kincaid recalled that the only time she got out of a moving car is when she saw four Persian rugs on the lawn of a woman's garage sale.

Kincaid, who is also an interior designer, said she knew they were Baluchi rugs and were selling for \$15 each. Kincaid bought all four for \$60. She brought them to her favorite rug dealer and sold them to him for \$1,200.

"It pays to be an educated consumer," she said.

Kincaid, author of *The Garage Sale Decorator's Bible: How to Find Treasures, Fix Them and Furnish Your Home*, has been shopping at garage sales for 20 years. Before then, she had never been to garage sales.

"It was a long-distance move gone bad, and we lost everything in that move," she said.

She said movers destroyed their belongings. Their newly built home sat empty.

Kincaid started going to garage sales to find items for her new house. Then she got hooked.

"I decided that everything in my home I would buy from garage sales," she said.

It took her a couple of months worth of sales to fill her house, and she hasn't stopped since.

"You can buy brand-new things for pennies on the dollar," Kincaid said.

She said garage sales are good for people's budgets. Shoppers can buy things at garage sales, or even fix them up like Kincaid does, and sell them for a higher price.

Kincaid considers herself a professional garage sale shopper.

"Professionals are called dealers. These people make a very handsome living. I'm a professional because I have made a living on this," she said.

Pricing

Kincaid compiled a pricing guide based on her experiences so she knows what items go for. She said it helps sellers price their items and buyers with their bargaining power.

She said negotiating on price depends on what the item is. For example, if a new toaster is selling for \$7, Kincaid said she can probably get \$5 for it.

"My rule of thumb is half. I'll offer them half of what the price is marked," she said.

At the same time if the price is right, she'll pay it. She found a Bombay chest with inlay for \$15 and gladly paid the asking price. She later had it appraised for \$1,200.

"Most people expect when you're hosting a sale for people to bargain with you," Kincaid said.

Good, Bad And Ugly Garage Sales

A drive-by can tell shoppers a lot about garage sales, especially if they are looking to hit several in one day.

If it's "late in the afternoon and they have a ton of nice stuff, you know it's priced way too high because the stuff wouldn't still be there," Kincaid said.

On the other hand, if there is only one card table set up, people are going to pass on it.

For good selection, it's good to hit them early. "However, the seller probably won't bargain as much early in the day. Later in the afternoon, the bargaining ball is in the buyer's court," she said.

Kincaid has a wants-and-needs list that she brings with her to sales.

Chris Heiska, founder of YardSaleQueen.com, buys on impulse without a list.

"I buy whatever catches my eye," she said.

But three years ago, Heiska was on a mission.

Her brother and his fiancée were planning a large wedding. They were smarting after paying \$500 for their wedding cake. Heiska's future sister-in-law had asked her to find a cake topper at a garage sale.

The next weekend, Heiska found a brand-new Mickey and Minnie Mouse cake topper for 50 cents.

"It worked perfectly because they were going to Disney World for their honeymoon," she said.

From March to November, she goes out each Saturday to as many garage sales as she can. She reads newspapers and checks online for church sales.

"They're hit or miss. It all depends on what people donate. With church sales, they're pretty well priced," Heiska said. "It's usually going for a cause. The money you spend is being put to good use."

Kincaid said she's found that because people donate items, the merchandise is not as high quality. She cautioned that it's usually buyer beware with electronics at those sales because there's no place to plug them in and test them.

No matter where garage sales shop, it's the prospect of finding that jewel that drives them.

"It's always finding things you're looking for that you were just about to buy new that you find at a garage sale for cheap," Heiska said.

Tips For Hosting Sales

- Garage sales will only be as good as your signs. They are important because people are trying to hit as many as they can.
- Remove the signs when the sale is over.
- Big items in the driveway are going to draw people in.
- Have a box of toys around so children can play while parents shop.
- Have everything priced.
- Clean merchandise.
- Have electronics in the back of the sale and have them up and running so buyers know they work.
- Never ever put masking tape on wood furniture. When masking tape comes off the wood, the glue won't.
- Have clothes arranged by gender and size.
- Wear your money on you.
- Set sale up like a showroom.

Shopping Tips

- Put together your wants-and-needs list.
- Plot out your course by geographic locations.
- Keep an extension cord in the car to test electronics, appliances, etc.
- Carry a magnifying glass.
- Carry a tape measure.
- Wear your money on you instead of bringing a purse.
- Go with smaller bills and change to make it easy.
- Have a list of measurements of items needed or spaces in home.
- If you don't have a tape measure, keep in mind a \$1 bill is six inches long.
- When you agree to buy an item and you have to leave and come back, take a drawer or cushion from the item with you and leave a deposit so someone cannot buy the item from under you.

More Resources

- [Get Ready For A Yard Sale](#)
- [How To Get Top Dollar](#)
- [Handy Pricing Guide](#)
- [Yardsalequeen.com](#)

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