



Image courtesy of Agio

STORE MORE

Get your things up and out of the way with creative storage ideas

By KATE SULLIVAN | CTW FEATURES

If your home-storage method is throwing anything you don't immediately need into a closet, it's time for a change. Organized storage enables you to fit everything in and find things later. Plus, you'll have more peace of mind when your belongings are packed away in their own specified place. From second homes to studios, here's an expert look at how to create your own organized storage system at home.

Look with new eyes

Find hidden storage where you never thought it existed. Utilize space over doors and underneath beds. "Most people overlook this valuable space saving real estate," says Olescia Hanson, spokesperson for The Container Store. Take a walk through your house, look above the doors and sneak a peak under each bed to see where you can maximize making extra room. Christina MacDonald of DRS & Associates recommends mounting when possible. "Opt for a plasma screen television that you can hang on the wall as opposed to a regular television to free up key storage space," she says.

Aim high

Don't settle for one shelf in your standard closet. "You want more than one layer in the closet to store seasonal items or extra linens that you don't use on a regular basis," says Hanson. Think of purchasing a tiered organizer to lie atop the existing shelf. MacDonald agrees, "Invest in closet organizers, shoe racks or anything else that will keep your belongings organized."

Divide and conquer

Once you have identified the shelves to build on, think cubby mode. Hanson notes, "You don't want to go too high, not more than two or three stacks in a closet otherwise you will create an avalanche and items will topple over." Go tall and then wide with your sorting strategy. This allows for easy accessibility to items later.

Keep it moving

Get creative. Turn a closet into a mini home office or a home for your hobby. Hanson once saw a scrapbook enthusiast create a craft cart to store all her accessories, wheeled in and out only as needed. Others store desks in a closet, rolling the work cart into the respective room when they get down to business.

Playing keep or toss

Even with maximum organization, you probably won't be able to store everything. If you don't use it, lose it. Hanson advises, "Anything you haven't used in two years, it shouldn't be there." Host a garage sale or donate to charity - just make sure to purge from your premises.

© CTW Features

For the birds

Entice your local feathered friends with a backyard fit for an eco-friendly king

By JEFF SCHNAUFER | CTW FEATURES

Solar-powered running water for the bath. Sustainable wood for the home. Recycled milk jug feeders. The rise of eco-friendly products for the birds in your backyard has taken off faster than a hungry hummingbird.

"People, especially bird watchers, want to do the right thing for the environment," says Bill Thompson III, editor of Bird Watcher's Digest in Marietta, Ohio. "They prefer to feel good about the products they buy and use." Here are a few bird-beckoning backyard fixtures that should leave with a clear conscience.

Bath time

Among the most popular new trends are solar powered pumps for birdbaths. One by Birds Choice retails at around \$90 and has a battery backup in case the day is overcast.

"It has two functions," says Henrik Lehmann Weng, chief executive officer at Wild Bird Centers in Glen Echo, Md. "One is that birds are attracted to the moving water, but also breaking surface of the water will break the development of mosquito eggs."

Dinner is served

Bird feeders have gone green, says Freddy Howell, owner of the Wild Bird Center of Los Gatos, Calif. One recycled plastic milk jug feeder by Bird's Choice is called the hopper, where seed goes in the top and comes out the bottom, just like a grain hopper. The hopper retails for \$55 and up, while less expensive feeders made of recycled lumber go for as low as \$25.



Image courtesy of Straight Line Designs

Shelter from the storm

Howell sells a growing number of handcrafted domiciles by local artists, an eco-friendly option that uses recycled materials and reduces transportation pollution from out-of-state manufacturers.

"I have some artists that use recycled wood, such as end pieces from other milling and recycled fence boards, and some that use driftwood," Howell says. "I also have a line from a local artist that uses downed trees and hollows out the inside."

Gourd shaped birdhouses, which may retail from between \$25 and \$40, are also popular for purple martins, chickadees, bluebirds and many others. Some are made of hollowed-out gourds, which Howell says are easy to decorate and have a natural look. These gourds may only last a few years, while others are made of more durable material.

Despite the tough economy, Weng of Wild Bird Centers says his industry is experiencing an increase in sales as much as 12 percent. He links this to the staycation trend, which may be causing people to spend more on their backyards and, by proxy, shelter for birds.

© CTW Features

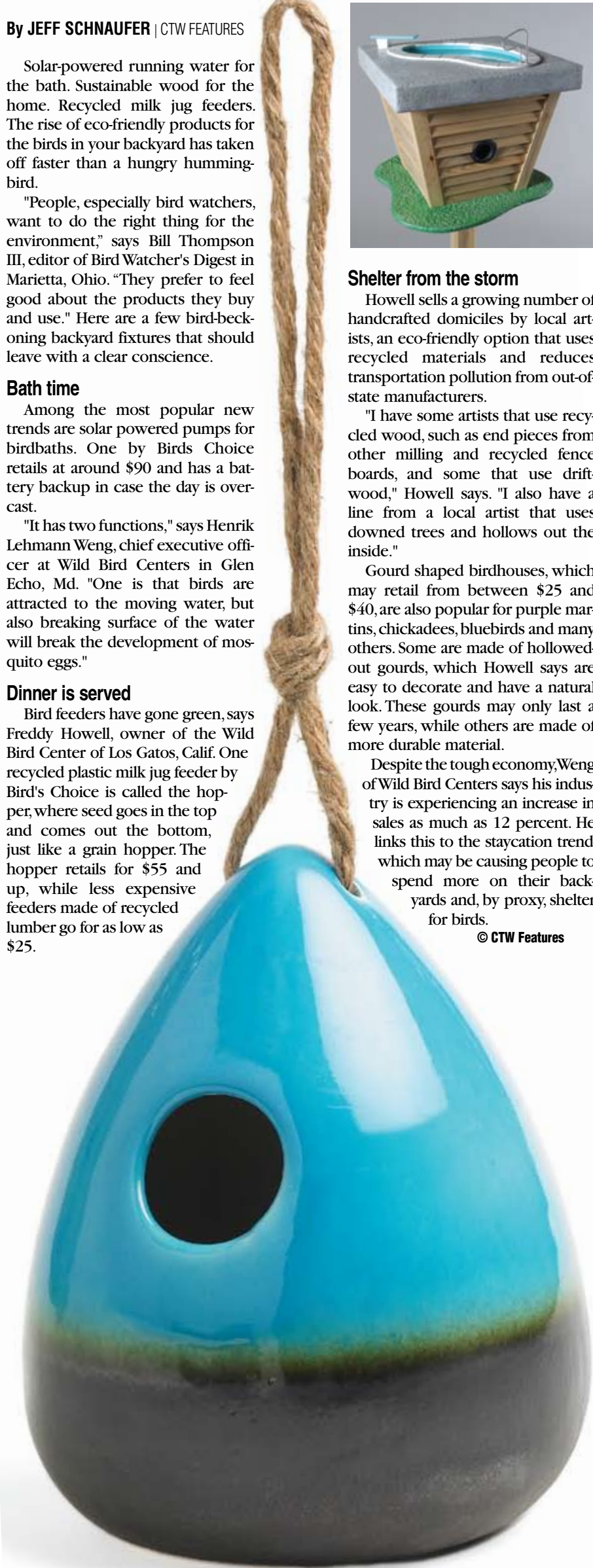


Image courtesy of Smith & Hawken



Image courtesy of Design Studio B

change on the cheap

Make your budget-friendly mark with texture, light, color and accessories

By MORGAN MCMILLAN | CTW FEATURES

Is your bedroom starting to feel a little drab? Don't think you have enough money to change it? Well, think again - alter your atmosphere with a slight color change and get ready to be wowed.

Inexpensive, small changes in color for subtle accents can make a not-so-subtle improvement. When colorful accessories stand out against neutral-colored walls and flooring, the whole room can look better. Color accenting from small items like pillows and picture frames is an inexpensive trick to use in every room of the house but here are a couple keys pieces of advice from design experts on how to use it in the bedroom.

Buckle Down on Bedding

It's all about pillows, pillows, pillows - that, and finding other inexpensive ways to change out your bedding besides buying a whole new comforter set for every season. From fancy duvet covers or thinner bedding coverlets for the summertime, the bolder the accessories on top of your comforter, the more vibrant the room will start to look. Laura Kimball of Perry Hall, Md.-based LCK Interiors suggests pillows "with trimmings, color, design and texture."

As far as colors and textures go, "Wool and velvet in winter, and white, bright linen in spring," says Karen Blissenbach, principal designer for Rochester, Minn.-based Design Studio B.

Give Purpose to Accessories

"Lamps would be the next biggest difference you can make," Blissenbach says. Change your lamp shades or add different pieces of artwork to coordinate with the rest of the room.

"Art work is inexpensive," Kimball says. And do-it-yourself art projects are even cheaper. "Add a piece of fabric or paper wrapped around a canvas to look like art," she adds.

The key is to keep it simple. Even the smallest touches can mean the world to an otherwise drab master bedroom.

© CTW Features

AD / SPONSORSHIP

