

29 Items Veteran Preppers Get From Garage Sales

Let's face it, prepping can be expensive.

Anyone who has started adding up a month's worth of groceries knows that, let alone trying to pay for a year's worth to put in your stockpile. That can be scary; scary enough that it turns many people away from prepping altogether.

But what if you could save money on prepping? What if I was to tell you that you don't have to spend a fortune and you don't have to buy every single piece of survival gear that people are touting? For that matter, what if I was to tell you that you can get an awful lot of what you need dirt cheap, especially if you're willing to take someone else's hand-me-downs, rather than buying everything new?

Well, you can. The great American institution of the garage sale may have well been created for preppers. You and I may not be able to find everything we need at our neighborhood sale, but we can find a lot of it. That's especially true when it comes to buying the less essential items of equipment that we might want to have for a long-term survival situation.

[What Survival Secret We Lost To History](#)

One thing you want to remember, as you go to garage sales, is that things can be used for other than their intended purpose. Re-purposing items, to turn them into survival gear, is a great idea. So keep your mind open and look at the item for what it is, not what it is intended to be.

I've been to many garage sales, with the idea of buying things for survival. Here are some of my favorite finds:

Camping Gear

Camping gear is probably one of the easiest things to find at garage sales. People buy it all the time, use it once, then let it sit around for years. Eventually, they clean out their garage or basement and put it in a garage sale. Usually, it's only been used once or twice, so you don't need to worry about it being worn out. Just make sure all the pieces are there though; as people tend to lose things like tent poles.

Bicycles

If the power is out and there's no gasoline, you're going to need something to use for transportation. Worldwide, the bicycle is the most common alternative means of transportation today. In some countries, it's what the masses use, who can't afford a car. The nice thing is, there's not a whole lot that can go wrong with a bicycle; and whatever does go wrong isn't that hard to fix. So it's just about an ideal means of transportation for a survival situation.



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Candles

Have you priced candles lately?

They're ridiculous; especially the larger ones that will last a while. But if the lights go out, they'll be one of the most useful means of lighting around. I'm always keeping my eyes

open at garage sales for candles, which I can usually buy for about a quarter. Then, I melt them down and put them into spaghetti sauce jars, for use as survival candles. The lid keeps the wick dry and they will store forever.

One of the things I do with these candles is make them with four wicks. With all four wicks lighted, the candle puts out four times as much light. Granted, it won't last as long; but if I'm trying to use that light to work by, the extra light is essential.

Five-gallon Buckets

Preppers and five-gallon buckets go together.

Not only do we use them for storing food; but there are many other uses for them, like hauling water, gardening, and feeding animals. You can always find them at garage sales; especially garage sales for building contractors.

Just a note here; most people say to use food-grade plastic buckets for storing food. Then, they put an aluminized Mylar bag inside the bucket, to seal the food in. If you've got that Mylar bag in there, or any other type of bag, it really doesn't matter if the bucket is food-grade or not. The mold release agents that make a bucket not food grade, can't soak through the plastic bag.



Gardening Tools

I stockpile more gardening tools than I need. Part of this is redundancy; keeping spares in case one breaks. My other reason is to have enough for neighbors to use. I assume that my neighbors are going to come knocking on my door when the brown stuff hits the rotary air movement device. Rather than totally shut them out, I intend to co-opt them, getting them started at gardening. So not only do I have extra gardening tools, but lots of seed too.

Rugged Clothing

Most of us don't have enough rugged clothing; as the clothing that we wear everyday is for style, not rough use. Stocking up on jeans, boots and other work clothes is a good idea, which most people forget about.

Kids Clothes

Your children are going to have a different clothing problem than you do. They'll be outgrowing theirs. That means you need

to have clothing for at least the next couple of sizes stashed away somewhere. If you do this with clothing that you buy at garage sales, it's a whole lot cheaper.

My wife used to do this, when our kids were small. She was a champion garage-saler and she'd constantly be buying clothing for the kids. But she wouldn't buy the size they were wearing at the time, she'd be buying clothing for the next three years. Those clothes were stored in boxes, by size. That way, when the kids needed the next size up, she'd already have a whole box of clothing ready for them.

Coats & other Winter Clothing

Coats, hats, gloves, scarves and boots also tend to show up in garage sales a lot, especially for children. Just like the other clothing, our kids will be outgrowing their coats and boots. Having a few extras, in larger sizes will be important.

When buying these, look for rugged clothing, rather than style. Our kids will have chores too, and lightweight, stylish clothing just won't survive.

Canning Jars

I can't see any reason to ever buy new canning jars, as there are so many of them at garage sales; and they're a whole lot cheaper there. You'll have to buy lids for them, but that's a whole lot cheaper than buying the jars. Stock up good on the lids, as you'll be using the jars over and over again.

9 Steps to a Successful Garage Sale



1.) Pick a date

Once you have your date, invite friends to join you - the more stuff for sale the better!



2.) Go through your house

Ask yourself questions like: "How long has it been since I used this?"



3.) Clean

Scrub and wash all of the items you are selling.



6.) Price items to SELL!

Why spend the time having a garage sale if you price things too high to sell? Price items to sell quickly.

5.) Advertise

Advertise for FREE on Facebook, Craigslist, and homemade signs

4.) Group your items

Organize your items by size and category.



7.) Place things on tables (not on ground)

People buy more when they can see it on a table.

8.) Price your items and label clearly

Price your items, people buy more when they know the prices.

9.) Be Organized

Have small bills for change and plastic bags for bought items. Plus - download our FREE Spreadsheet to help with multiple sellers!



Schoolbooks

In any TEOTWAWKI event, w

e can pretty much count on government services going away. That includes schooling. If our kids are going to become educated, it will be because we do so at home. But that means having the books to work with.

We homeschooled our children all the way through high school and they all excelled when they go to college. The statistics prove that homeschooled students are superior in their academic achievement. They also have a broader base of knowledge, as homeschooling families tend to turn everything into a learning experience.

Hand Tools

Most of us are so used to using power tools, that we may not even have a full set of hand tools. But if the power is out, those fancy cordless power tools aren't going to do us a bit of good. We're going to need to do things the old way; and that means hand tools. You won't find them often in garage sales, but you will find them.

Hand Operated Appliances

Just like tools, we've become accustomed to using power appliances in our kitchens. But those are going to be just as worthless, without electrical power, as the cordless tools will be. However, just about everything we do with powered appliances today, was done some other way, before those appliances were invented. We can still use those methods, if we can find the appropriate appliances. They'll often show up in garage sales and especially in estate sales.

Cast-iron Cookware

The best cookware to have in a grid-down situation is cast-iron. If you're forced to cook over an open fire or even to cook on your barbecue grille, you really don't want some nice, pretty enameled aluminum pan. You want something that's rugged and that means cast-iron. Don't worry about how it looks, just as long as it is intact. Cast-iron cleans up amazingly well, even if it's a bit rusty and grimy.

Hunting & Fishing Equipment

Many of us are planning on hunting and fishing to augment our food stockpiles. You can find a lot of used hunting and fishing gear at garage sales, especially if you can find one where a man has died and his wife is selling off his things. Those are rare, but when you find one, it's like hitting the jackpot.

First-aid Supplies & Medical Equipment

Durable medical equipment, like crutches and wheelchairs are common items to find at garage sales. People buy them because they have a need and then when they no longer need them, they just sit in the garage or basement. You can also find some first-aid supplies, such as boxes of gloves and items for taking care of people with chronic problems. This stuff is expensive; so if you can find it at a garage sale, it will save you a lot.

Carts

If you can't use your car, you're going to need some way of hauling things around; whether that means hauling dirt for your garden or water from the pond nearby. You might have to

use your imagination a bit here, but there are often carts of various kinds available at garage sales. Wheelbarrows, children's wagons, and hand trucks are all useful.

One of my favorite finds in this category was a bicycle trailer, intended for carrying small children. The nylon cover was badly damaged, but the frame was in great shape. Taking the cover off allowed me to convert it to a cargo trailer, making it useful as a survival tool. Now I can go to the canal, with three five-gallon buckets in the trailer, to get water.

Real Silver Flatware

Most people are more astute about selling off valuables in their garage sales, than they used to be a generation ago. When I was small, my mother used to buy old glassware at garage sales. Some of her purchases, for which she paid less than a dollar, ended up being antiques worth hundreds of dollars.

You're unlikely to find deals like that today, unless you happen to live in the New England area and get to the garage sales early. But you can find real silver flatware from time to time. Of course, you're going to have to know what you're looking at, or you'll miss out on this deal. But if you can find it, you can buy it for much less than the metal is worth.

Many preppers collect gold and silver coins, for use in barter. This flatware can be melted down into ingots and used in the exact same way. You'll want to do so accurately, so that you have ingots of exactly one ounce, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce, or $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce.



Oil-burning Lanterns

Oil-burning lanterns are nothing more than a novelty to most people, bought as an item of décor and never used for their intended purpose. But that doesn't mean that they can't be. These are great for use in a grid-down situation, as they will burn just about anything; you don't have to have the commercial "lamp oil" to use them.

Keep your eyes open for the old Coleman lanterns as well. Those burn gasoline, which will probably be the most common fuel in existence, even though there won't be enough of it.

Kerosene Heater

This is a rare find at a garage sale, because most people who have them, want to keep them. But every once in a while, you'll find a kerosene heater at one of these sales. If you do, grab it, even if they say that it doesn't work. They can always be fixed.

Fabric & Sewing Supplies

Few people make their own clothes these days, even though there was a time when most clothing was made at home. Should we ever be faced with something serious that takes down the grid, that time could come again.

Many elderly women sewed when they were younger. If they did, chances are that they have boxes of fabric stashed away in the attic; fabric that they'll never use. As long as it has been kept clean and dry, that fabric will still be good; and it will provide you with a way of keeping your family in clothing.

Old Sewing Machines

Speaking of sewing, keep your eyes out for an old sewing machine; I mean a really old one. When manufacturers first moved from treadle to electric power, they simply removed the machine from the stand with the treadle and attached a motor, using a short belt to connect it to the lower pulley, where the belt from the treadle had attached.

This means that many old sewing machines can easily be converted to treadle operation. All you have to do is remove the motor and build a treadle, attaching it to that pulley via a belt (paracord will work for this). You might even find a sewing table with a treadle somewhere, as people use them for decorative tables today.

[This Timeless Collection of Forgotten Wisdom Will Help You Survive!](#)

Building Materials

It's a good idea to keep some basic building materials on hand for making emergency repairs on your home. I'm talking about

things like plywood, 2"x 4"s, roof shingles and hardware. A lot of this shows up in garage sales, especially after people finish remodeling projects.

Lawn Mowers

Used lawn motors are a great source of small motors, which can be used for a variety of other tasks. If you're the handyman type, you can make things like grain mills and sawmills from those engines.

Car Batteries

Used car batteries aren't as good as new ones, but you can still use them for part of your battery backup system to go with your solar panels or wind turbine.

Big Screen TV

I'm talking about the old-fashioned big screen televisions, the kind that took up a corner of the living room, not the flat panels ones we have today. If you can find one, it has a big Fresnel Lens mounted directly behind the screen. This can be used to make a Fresnel solar cooker.

To make the cooker, mount the lens in a frame, on a stand. Then use it like a magnifying glass, to focus the sun's rays onto a pot with food in it. The focal length of the lens will be about two feet behind it.



Satellite TV Antenna

Another thing that can be used to make a solar cooker is a satellite TV antenna. I'm not talking about the little ones we have today; I'm talking about the ones that are five-feet in diameter. If you coat the inside of the dish with aluminum foil, shiny side visible being careful to prevent wrinkles, it will focus the sun's rays, just like it focuses radio waves. Replacing the receiver in the midst of the antenna with something to hold a cook pot will make it possible to cook with the sun's rays.

Food

You don't often find food at a garage sale, unless they are selling cokes and hot dogs. But every once in a while, you'll find someone who has food to sell. Often, this is large quantities of one or two items; perhaps that they had gotten at a good deal. If they have it, they'll be selling it cheap.

When we lived in the Denver area, we used to go to a food auction to buy food at time. This unusual business bought lots of food which had been damaged in shipping. Usually, only a small percentage of the food had been damaged and the rest was fine. They would auction off the good part at incredibly cheap prices.

Radio

Few people use a radio today, other than car radios. Yet, there was a time when the radio was common. Many people still have them and the government still uses them as part of the Emergency Broadcast System. This is one of the best sources of information in a crisis.

Better yet is to find a shortwave radio. If anyone will be broadcasting after a disaster, it will be ham radio operators. Being able to pick up on their transmissions will provide the best source of information there will be.

Trailer

Last, but not least, keep your eyes open for a cargo trailer.

If you're going to bug out in your family car or SUV, having a small trailer will give you the capability of taking along much more than you would be able to take otherwise. You can even set up your trailer on the inside, so that it has racks to hold your gear and supplies.



Survival Things That **The Pioneers
Took With Them When They
Traveled For Months**

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