

New England HOME



Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

Winter Wonders

Living at the intersection of style and comfort



Perspectives

Five Questions



Karen Bradbury, owner of Closet & Storage Concepts in Norwalk, on how a well-organized closet or mudroom or garage can make life easier.

1 Why might someone need a professional organizer?

First and foremost, being disorganized is stressful. People who are juggling careers, raising children, and are very busy can't afford to be disorganized. That's where we come in. If we can help people achieve a more organized lifestyle, it makes their lives go a little more smoothly. Take a crowded closet, for example. Many people can't find things

in their closet ("I don't have anything to wear!") because items are piled up, shoved close together, or falling off the hangers. A custom closet can hold double the contents of a standard closet. We know how to create an environment that is functional and a pleasant experience to walk into every day.

2 What are common problems you see with closet design?

| INTERVIEW BY ROBERT KIENER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MORGAN IONE YEAGER |

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A lot of closets are poorly designed from the beginning. Often when houses are being built, it is hard to customize a closet because the builder doesn't know who will be using it. Some contractors will just put up wire systems or a pole and a shelf, hoping to accommodate all different kinds of hangings. So you inevitably get spaces that are not utilized very effectively. To customize a design, we visit the client's home and ask a lot of questions. We inventory everything—clothes, shoes, purses, jewelry, scarves—and then put together a custom-tailored solution. For example, we recently put in a pull-out ironing board for a client who is only five-foot-one, so we had to make sure the elevation of it would work for her. We also designed upper clothes rails that sit lower so she could easily reach them.

3 You organize more than just closets?

We do pretty much anything that has to

do with home organization. Designing storage systems for closets, from small reach-in models to large, sophisticated dressing rooms, is a big part of our business, but we also do mudrooms, laundry rooms, pantries, home offices, wall units, Murphy beds, and garage organizations. Winter is a big time for garage organizing because clients want to fit both cars in a garage that's been filling up with stuff the rest of the year! The spaces that are the most difficult are the most rewarding to design because you really have to think very creatively about how you can accommodate everything.

4 What trends are you seeing in closet design?

The biggest trend is the use of new wood-toned materials and finishes that take closets from a traditional look to one that's a little more edgy and contemporary. In new construction, especially with larger homes, there is now a big emphasis on the master suite closet. The bedroom can be smaller and less cluttered because the dressers and other furniture that used to be in the bedroom are now being built into the closet. In the past, closets were

for hanging, some shelving, and shoe storage, but now they are more like dressing rooms, complete with everything from islands with drawers for jewelry, makeup tables, mirrors, and even coffee makers. Lighting has also evolved from basic task lighting to warm mood lighting to LED under-shelf and strip lighting that illuminates clothes.

5 What other new or unusual features are becoming popular?

We put hampers and drying racks in closets and laundry rooms. A client recently said, "My husband gets his dry cleaning and takes all the plastic and stuff off and just throws it on the floor." We gave him a trash can on his side of the closet. We can also do things like add steamers and ironing boards that pull down or that fit into a drawer for last-minute touch-ups. Valet rods enable people to hang out their next day's wardrobe. We have quite a few options for storing jewelry and scarves and belts, and have even done hidden drawers in the toe kick of a closet system. | *Closet & Storage Concepts, Norwalk, (203) 957-3304, closetandstorageconcepts.com* 