

HOMEGARDEN

Grandmas Offer Old-Fashioned Housekeeping Tips

BY JAMIE KNODEL

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Grandmothers are masters of handing out hugs and kisses. They're also masters in the kitchen, with a needle and thread, in the laundry room, and at handing out advice. They know how to make a home and keep it in running order. And more often than not, they know how to do it without spending much money.

Younger generations seem to have missed out on some of the lessons that their grandmothers knew so well. Those everyday, practical skills — sewing a missing button on a cuff, roasting a chicken, getting a garden to grow — can help stretch today's household budgets as well.

Author Erin Bried got tired of not knowing these skills, so she went straight to the experts: grandmothers. She cataloged household tips and practical advice from 10 grandmothers across the U.S. in "How to Sew a Button: And Other Nifty Things Your Grandmother Knew" (Ballantine Books, \$15).

We wondered what lessons grandmothers had to share. Here are their tips for making a house a home, and a home that can stick to a budget.

Lila Brooks, 81, of South Dallas

Her family tree: 4 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren

What her family calls her: Big Mama

Get a routine and stick to it: In Brooks' home, Saturday was cleaning day — the bed linens were changed; the laundry was washed, ironed and ready to go for the next week; the floors were scrubbed; windows were washed; and all the work was done before the family went out to have fun. They didn't have to worry about heavy-duty chores for another week.

Get familiar with your sewing kit: Save your clothes and extend their lives by knowing how to patch jeans, sew on buttons and repair busted zippers.

Forget about dilly-dallying: Get up and get busy. "Get your house straightened right away. Start off by making your bed first thing," Brooks says.

Expect the unexpected: Brooks is always ready for whoever might



Dallas, Texas resident Bea Kassees says to help her grocery dollar go further, she came up with "10,000 ways of cooking hamburger," Monday, December 21, 2009.

JIM MAHONEY/DALLAS MORNING NEWS/MCT

drop by, something she learned from her own grandmother. The house is kept tidy so when guests pop in, there's no need to scurry around, straightening the house.

Frances Beckwith, 92, of Fort Worth, Texas

Her family tree: 6 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren

What her family calls her: Mimo

Above all else, have some respect: Whether it's for people or for things, treat things properly.

Love your linens: "It's a shame that today people don't use linens the way they used to." Dress a table before having company to a dinner or party, Beckwith says. Retire place mats and cloths when years of use and laundering start to show.

Quality counts: Save to buy the nicest pieces of furniture you can afford, then care for them. Keep furniture dusted and protected from sharp-edged decorations.

Good day, sunshine: Hang your clothes to dry on a clothesline,

"so they'll smell sweet like the sunshine."

Use the good stuff: If you've got china, use it when entertaining. Paper is almost never OK in Beckwith's book.

Bea Kassees, 79, of East Dallas

Her family tree: 14 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren

What her family calls her: Grandma Bea

Don't be afraid to accept help: Kassees' mother-in-law lived with

her when her children were young. "She loved to cook, and I loved to let her cook." Kassees appreciated the help as well as the skills she learned from her husband's mother. To this day, her mother-in-law's Middle Eastern recipes are the ones her grandchildren request most often.

Ground hamburger is your friend: Kassees says to help her grocery dollar go further, she came up with "10,000 ways of cooking hamburger."

Utilize the oil of the gods:

Kassees used olive oil to help ward off everything from stomach trouble to complexion issues. She's been known to apply it directly to superdry skin to provide relief.

Be a teacher: Parents need to get their children started with chores early. Teach them skills as you're doing the tasks. Let kids help make the beds, wash the dishes, put away the laundry. There's no need to wait until they're a certain age; teach them bit by bit. Before you know it, they'll be better than their teacher.

Norma Field, 86, of North Dallas

Her family tree: 2 granddaughters, 2 great-grandchildren

What her family calls her: Mimi

Eat leftovers: Don't let foods go to waste. If your husband doesn't like them, train him to by serving them until he eats them.

Simple is best: Keep clutter and knickknacks to a minimum; there's less to clean around that way.

Jump into new challenges: When she got married at 29, Field had never cooked a meal in her life. That didn't stop her from learning.

Don't try to do it all yourself: Field's husband helped around the house. They split the household chores — he cleaned the bathrooms, she did the cooking — and took a team approach to housekeeping and child-rearing.

A fresh start: Always start the day by making your bed, and never go to bed with dirty dishes in the sink.

How to Sew a Button

Author Erin Bried decided to collect tips and tricks from grandmothers when she realized she had forgotten or missed out on many of them from her own grandmother. She shares them in "How to Sew a Button: And Other Nifty Things Your Grandmother Knew," and several video demonstrations, including how to make pie or fold a fitted sheet, can be viewed at howtosewabutton.com.

Bried teaches every adult should know how to:

— Roast a chicken.

— Garden and grow food — even if it's just a window garden or patio tomato plant.

— Know the power of baking soda and vinegar. When it comes to cleaning house, there's little else you need to make things sparkle.

Professional Organizer Teaches How To De-Clutter

BY KERRY MCCRAY

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MODESTO, Calif. — When Peggy Gardiner teaches a community education class on how to declutter your home, she asks students how many of them can park their car in the garage.

Only about half of the students raise their hands.

"And most of them have two-car garages," Gardiner said. "Can you believe it?"

Believe it. As the new year sets in, and people aim to simplify their lives, consider the following statistics:

The U.S. Department of Energy reports that one-quarter of people with two-car garages have so much stuff in there that they can't park a car.

According to the National Soap and Detergent Association, getting rid of clutter would eliminate 40 percent of housework in the average home.

The National Association of Professional Organizers says we spend one year of our lives looking for lost items.

Harris Interactive reports that 23 percent of adults say they pay bills late (and incur fees) because they lose them.

Enter Gardiner, a professional organizer and housekeeper. The 63-year-old, who used to run estates for wealthy people, teaches classes on — well — how to sort through stuff.

You need a class for that? Many people do, according to Gardiner, who in 2008 started teaching home organization through Modesto (Calif.) Junior College's Community Education Department. Classes are usually full or close to full.

Students run the gamut from people who, say, just can't bring themselves to clean out their closets to people who can't find a clear path through their house.

She offers some surprising tips — "If you buy fancy underwear, don't let it languish in the drawer;" "If it's not a bill, it goes in the trash" — things she learned in her years of managing large homes for wealthy people.

Gardiner, who was born and raised in Modesto, got into the estate management field when her husband, Richard, became ill and the couple was forced to close their real estate investment business.

Gardiner hopped online to research possible careers and eventually signed up to study at the Starkey International Institute for Household Management in Denver. There, she learned everything from how to cook and serve a sit-down dinner for 12 to how to keep track of plumbers, contractors, finances and the like.

She went on to work for three families. One skill she picked up managing their homes is how to control clutter. One employer, she said, went so far as to prefer empty drawers.

Gardiner, who lives in a very tidy home in Riverbank, Calif., is a firm believer in less is more. She advises a family of four get by on eight place settings of dishes and 12 place settings of silverware.

Closets should be sparse, too. Got more than 16 pairs of shoes? Upwards of four purses? Get rid of them, Gardiner said.

Not surprisingly, Gardiner eschews storage units. "People don't even know what they have in there," she said.

She shakes her head at the idea of buying plastic bins and cardboard boxes before you clean out a room. "A lot of people never get around to it," she said.

Instead, Gardiner recommends picking a room in need of attention. Give yourself a few hours and three trash bags — one for garbage, one for things to put away, and one for things you plan to donate.

Do so the same day. That way, you can park your car in your garage.

TIPS TO ORGANIZE CLOSET, KITCHEN, KIDS STUFF AND OTHER HOME AREAS

Closet organization:

— It doesn't matter how pretty the bras and panties are. If you want frilly underwear, then wear them every day. Do not leave them in the drawer for a special occasion that never comes.

— Throw away any individual sock that has not had its mate in two weeks.

— No person needs more than 16 pairs of shoes.

Kitchen clutter:

— Your refrigerator is for food only. The top should be empty of everything except possibly dust.

— The countertop should not have anything on it that does not relate to cooking.

— Other than a toaster and a coffee maker that is used every day, all other appliances should be stored in cupboards.

Children's clutter:

— Collect broken toys and throw them away.

— Secretly collect good toys the child does not play with, box them up and put them in the garage. If the child does not ask for one of the toys within a month, donate them.

— Donate old clothes and shoes immediately, before the child can grab a too-small pair of shoes and wear them to school.

More on home organization: www.lifeorganizers.com: Organize everything from your finances to your kids to your home.

www.hgtv.com: Quick tips for organizing and maintaining a clutter-free home from basement to attic.

www.flylady.net: As the Web site says, "Your free online coach, cheerleader, and fairy-godmother for decluttering and organizing your home and life!"



DARRYL BUSH/MODESTO BEE/MCT

Peggy Gardiner explains how she organizes her garage at her home, in Riverbank, California, December 27, 2009. Gardiner teaches a community education class on how to declutter your home.

Press & Dakotan

Beautiful Baby Contest 2010

Attention Parents, Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, Godparents & Friends:

We will be featuring our annual "Beautiful Baby Contest" in print and online on Wednesday, February 24, 2010. If you or someone you know has a child, we would love to include them in our feature!

To enter, simply submit your photo and entry form with the \$10 submission fee by Wednesday, February 10, 2010.

First place winners in the following categories will receive a framed winners print and gift certificates to local businesses:

- 1) 0-12 Months
- 2) 13-24 Months
- 3) 25 Months-3 Years
- 4) 4-7 Years
- 5) Multiple Births

Winners will be selected by the staff of Yankton Media, Inc.

Employees and family members of Yankton Media Inc. are ineligible to win.

Beautiful Baby Contest 2010

Submission fee (\$10) must accompany entry form to be valid.

Category #: _____ Age: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Child's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

*Submission of this form authorizes the publication of this photo in this contest in print and online at www.yankton.net.
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Entry Deadline: Wednesday, February 10, 2010

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