



Homes-Extra



MAG RUFFMAN

TOOL GIRL

More hang for your buck

Change your closet, change your mood

It's spring. And you're crabby. You don't know why you're cranky until you find yourself stuffing a parka into an overfull closet, thrusting your weight against the disheveled crush of winter garments, half of them falling off the hangers from repeated attacks by humans trying to add or extricate a coat.

And that's when it hits you; your sour irritability is based solely on the closet with its musty pong, wrinkled garments and items gone missing on doubled-up hangers.

RAGE TO RICHES

Luckily you can put closet-induced rage to work by going out to the garden and digging till you hit bedrock.

Or if chiseling the Canadian Shield doesn't make you chill out, you could opt for a quick closet makeover.

To test whether you're a good candidate for a closet makeover, do a Google image search for 'closet organization'. How you react is a clue to your mental health.

Go ahead, load several hundred closet images and ponder them. If your armpits prickle in cynical irritation, go back out to the garden and keep digging.

But if the photos of tidy, spacious closet systems make you sigh or slightly bite your lower lip, you're on the right track.

NOTE: According to the suggested Google search, nobody owns any black clothing; most people have 32 white linen shirts, eight pairs of beige linen pants, and six identical beige linen blazers, all spaced with laser precision at exactly 10 cm apart. Welcome to the world of 'interior porn'.

METAL DISORDER

Anyone of university age or older can tell you at least one story

of heartache concerning closet hardware. We've all been abused by poorly designed, pinching, aggravating, powder-coated metal shelving that we hack-sawed to length under a hail of sweat, cursing its horrible metal support rods and crappy anchors which, if overloaded, would explode out of the wall at 3 a.m. in a shattering avalanche of chaos and hangers.

If you don't want cheap hack-sawed DIY shelving, the only other option has traditionally been upscale closet design companies that create your dream closet, complete with drawers, shoe cubbies, tie racks, and perhaps a generous ottoman in the middle from which to consider the vast (beige) landscape of your clothing collection. You could get fabulous results with a few bucks. And when I say bucks I'm spelling it with three zeroes. And when I say fabulous, I'm spelling it faaaaaaaabulous.

Then a few years ago, Rubbermaid introduced a system that gave "custom" a new (and way cheaper) definition. Rubbermaid's 'Configurations' closet system can be installed by anyone with a drill, electronic stud finder, tape measure and level.

These closet components are in the 'forever' category when it comes to home improvement installations. I installed Configurations in my closet six years ago and still get a huge blast of contentment every time I go in there.

THE ROD COUPLE

Since I've recently been helping my friends Hugh and Carolyn convert part of a bedroom to a new walk-in closet, I eagerly convinced them to use Configurations.

With a couple of deluxe kits (\$200 each) and a few extra accessories — baskets, trouser hangers, shoe racks, tie and belt racks (\$300

— Hugh and Carolyn have permanently escaped closet-hell.

SHELF HELP

Here are the steps that make the system so easy to install:

- To start, install the horizontal metal bar across the back wall of the closet, fastening it through pre-drilled holes wherever there's a stud.

- Next, hook the included vertical supports in position on the horizontal bar. Slide them to exactly 24 inches apart with the included spacers. Tack down each vertical piece using a screw or two (screws and anchors are included)

- Add and adjust rods and shelves, which are the heart of the system; they nest inside each other, telescoping wider or narrower so that you never have to cut any metal.

- Now choose Configurations components including baskets, cubbies and other components to fill the wall with storage goodness.

Finally, experiment with the system to suit your clothes; reorganize racks, convert a shorter rod to one that extends the entire width of the closet, or switch out a basket for a shoe shelf.

Carolyn and Hugh had so much fun adjusting and tweaking their closet system last Sunday that they kept sending us photos of each new configuration till they had the perfect arrangement. (And look, they have some black clothes. Somewhere a designer just died.)

Rubbermaid Configurations is available at Canadian Tire and other home improvement retailers. For more info, visit www.rubbermaid.com.

— Mag Ruffman appears regularly on radio and TV.

Visit her online at www.toolgirl.com.



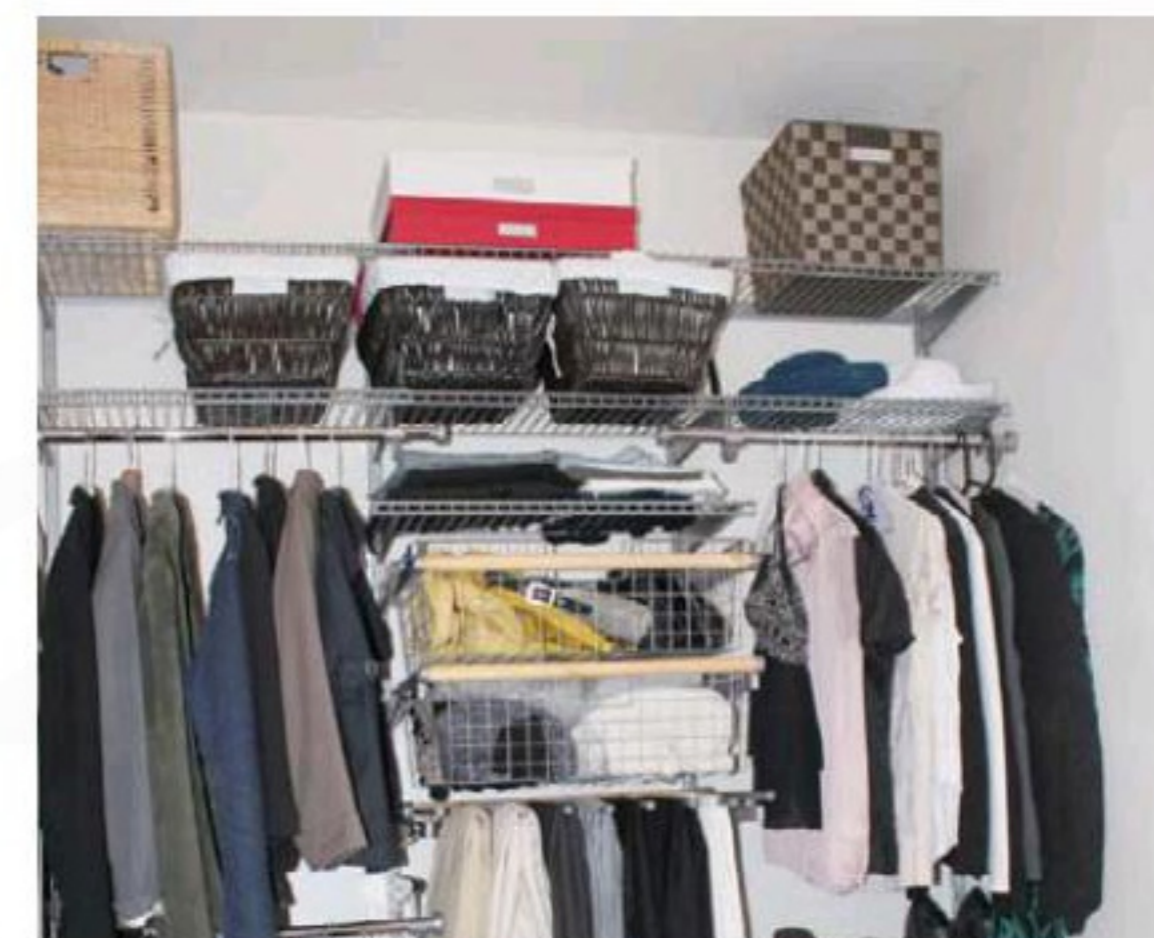
The entire closet hangs from the top horizontal bar, which can carry thousands of pounds of weight on the suspended vertical rods.

photo by Daniel Hunter



Add shelf brackets and shelves.

photo by Daniel Hunter



The final configuration.

photo by Hugh Duffy