

Let signs point all way to sale



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OK, let's face it, going to garage sales isn't brain surgery, but finding them can sometimes be challenging. If the garage sale signs aren't placed just right, then we might have to call on our maneuvering skills or we'll be meandering aimlessly through neighborhoods searching for treasures. Where we put our signs is critical to a successful sale. Julia Hooper found that out the hard way.

"There were no other signs up when I put mine up, so I didn't think it'd be a problem," she said.

But it was.

Julia was having a garage sale recently in east Mesa. She posted eight signs at 6:30 in the morning, hitting all the major intersections near her home. Little did she know a neighbor would put up signs after her and take away some of her business.

I discovered such sign hijacking one Saturday morning while doing what I'm always doing on a weekend morning - garage saling. Julia's pretty pink neon signs caught my eye (I just love pink!). On the sign, the words "Garage Sale" along with an arrow were printed clearly with a thick stroke of a black marking pen. I turned left at the corner, planning on going to her sale by following her pink signs. But lo and behold, what is this I see before me just a block up the street? It's another type of garage sale sign. This one's made out of a cardboard box and has different colors. Now I've got a mystery on my hands. Did Julia run out of pink signs and switch to another type, or is this a different sale, thrown by someone else? After some intense investigations (read: a little bit of driving!), I was able to solve it.

Turns out it was someone else's sale. And this neighbor was benefiting from Julia's posted signs at major corners. To get to Julia's sale, garage salers would have to drive about a half mile down the road. Problem is there were no more pink signs, so many people skipped her sale. Julia could have easily avoided any confusion by doing several things, including using her trademark pink neon board and simply drawing an arrow leading folks all the way to her sale. She would especially want to put one next to the other sign made out of cardboard.

Although it sounds like a minor problem, someone else's garage sale sign really can put a damper on your sale.

Some tips on how to drive folks to your sale even if the neighbors are having one:

- Put signs up early.
- Make sure someone from your sale regularly checks the signs. Many are blown down or even taken. The sign checker should also make sure your signs aren't conflicting with another sale.
- If you start with neon pink, stick with neon pink. Use it to guide garage salers all the way to your home.
- Keep it simple. All you need is the word "SALE" and an arrow on a good, solid, bright background. About 15 inches square is a good size. Any bigger and they're flapping in the wind and can't be seen.

- Before you post your signs, it's a good idea to check and make sure it's lawful to hang signs in your area.
- After the sale, take your signs down. It benefits you and your neighbors by keeping the neighborhood clean. Plus you can reuse the signs for your next sale.

Lynda Hammond runs the www.GarageSaleGal.com Web site, where you can list and look for garage sales online, and read past columns. Reach her at lynda@garagesalegal.com. She also appears on 3-TV's Good Morning Arizona.