

The hunt for hidden treasures begins in your own backyard

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Forget Captain Cook's lost treasure or the Incas' city of gold. Ontario's garage sales are where the real treasures can be found.

In the past I have found some amazing deals and even unique items. I was bitten by the garage sale bug years ago and I can't pass a sale without stopping.

Over the years I learned my lesson. It's easy to get ripped-off by some shady character who claims something works. In fact, it half works.

Once, I bought an electric can opener for \$2. The seller claimed the motor worked. The motor worked great, but the blade didn't.

There are lots of stories in the world of bargain hunting, from lost treasures to garbage.

Over the years I vowed never to be ripped off again, so I made a small list of what's hot and what's not.

Before purchasing items guaranteed for life find where these items can be taken for an in-store exchange.

Big department stores, such as Canadian Tire, might offer you a full in-store exchange. If they sell it, they exchange it. The list of merchandise and refunds varies from store to store so beware.

Hand tools such as wrenches, socket sets, saws, screwdriver sets and tool boxes, can be exchanged for the same item at stores such as Canadian Tire.

Plastic food keepers with a lifetime guarantee are hot at garage sales. Rubbermaid items are just one of the big namebrands.

Certain glassware items, such as Princess House, offer the purchaser half price exchanges on broken or cracked items. Mag-Light and Energizer flashlights offer the same



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guarantees.

The list is as endless as the merchandise these stores sell.

Angie Spence, from Waterloo, purchased Princess House glassware at a garage sale in Kitchener in August 1994.

"I recognize them (Princess House) as an exclusive product because they are guaranteed for life. If you break one you get a replacement for half price," said Spence.

"I purchased a set of two glass coffee cups for \$2, they are worth \$25 for both new."

Spence also purchased Lego blocks for her nine-year-old son Ryan at the same sale.

"I got 10 gallons (of Lego) for \$5. It's worth at least \$100 or more."

In the same month Spence said she purchased a Canadian Tire tool box from a garage sale.

"One latch was broken (on the tool box) so I got a replacement in return. Those things (Canadian Tire products) are really guaranteed for life."

Joe Blu, from Kitchener, has been going to garage sales for "a long time now, at least 10 years, all over."

"I bought a three-piece brass-coated fireplace tool kit. When I took it home (I found) it was solid brass. I bought it for \$5, it's worth \$145 at an antique store in Stratford."

Nancy Kimsey, a first-year Journalism-Print student at Niagara College, purchased an antique silver locket for 25 cents in 1992.

"I knew it was silver when I saw it. I couldn't believe that I found such a beautiful piece amongst junk jewelry. I think it's about 100 years old. What a deal."

Stephanie Turton, a first-year Journalism-Print student at Niagara College, bought an alligator skin purse for 30 cents in the summer of 1994.

"I was coming home from work when I saw a small lawn sale. I wasn't really expecting to find anything, so I was surprised to get such a great deal." The medium-sized purse sells for anywhere from \$300 to \$400.

Animal figurines, autographs, banks, beer cans, bubblegum cards, Cabbage Patch dolls, comic books, cookie jars, radios, handpainted neckties, military items, Pez dispensers, pocket knives, salt and pepper shakers and tools are some garage sale items.

I purchased a replica bubble gum machine for \$10. When I opened it I found it filled with \$9 worth of pennies, nickels, and dimes.

Recently, I purchased a six-battery Mag-Light flashlight for \$5. Retail can range anywhere from \$26 to \$45.

Treasures can be found on Pacific Islands — or your own backyard.