

Friday, June 15, 2018

# at home

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AT HOME WITH MARNI JAMESON

# Building a Case for the Everyday Splurge



Marni Jameson

*Reader Note: This week, I'm interrupting the series of columns on outfitting my outdoor space for the tactical reason that the furniture I was counting on arriving before my guests arrived did not arrive — though the guests did. I'll let you know next week how that all worked out.*

**T**hose who've been reading my column for a while know that occasionally I can write about some truly insignificant home design subjects with great passion. Take, for instance, columns I've written — I believe somewhat compellingly — about selecting outdoor rocks, the finer points of furniture legs, and the composition of carpet padding. I, frankly, find none of those topics boring and feel the same way about shower caddies.

My new shower caddy is life changing.

You laugh, but these little work-horses, can cause you to start or end your day (depending on your personal hygiene habits, which I really don't want to know about) with great annoyance (quite likely), immense forbearance (also likely), or the too-rare state of organized, pristine pleasure, where I'd like to take you now.

See, until lately, I'd put up with poorly made caddies, worth-what-I-paid pieces of junk that slipped and tipped, toppled and tilted, spilled their contents, never came clean, fell apart at the joints and rusted. After I tired of that, I just set all my shower products inelegantly on the floor.

However, Sarah Jenkinson, the U.S. agent for Sterlingham, a 30-year-old

English company known for luxury towel warmers and bathroom accessories, which it sells primarily to high-end hotels, raised the towel bar for me.

Last year, I got a deal on what I came to realize was the Tesla of shower caddies — a triple-basket chrome model that screw mounts into the shower wall. For seven months, it and all its unrealized potential sat on my shower floor waiting for what I am always waiting for, the right man with the right tools to come along.

My regular handyman refused to install it because he was nervous about drilling into the limestone shower wall.

Last week, an outdoor cabinet installer was here sinking bolts into stucco as easily as if pushing thumb-tacks into butter. And I nabbed him, and took him into my shower, which he thought was the most normal thing in the world. "Can you ...?"

"No problem," he said with confidence. "I'll do it tomorrow."

"Honey," I later pronounced to DC, "our quality of life is about to get a lot better." My husband looked over his glasses, ever wary. He sometimes accuses me — though unfairly — of hyperbole. "My day has come!"

The caddy went up. I was not disappointed.

"The shower caddy you use every day should be as good as you can afford," said Jenkinson, "But many aren't worth the plastic they're made of."

"That's one of my lifestyle philosophies!" I tell her: "Honor the acts of everyday living. People splurge on special-occasion stuff, like fancy crystal and formalwear, but not on the stuff of everyday, items you touch and use often, which matter more."

She's in violent agreement: "This is so difficult to explain to Americans," she said. "For items you use every

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## SPLURGE

From Page E8

day, go the distance, spend the money. We use the kitchen faucet more than anything in our house. If you're going to splurge, that's where you splurge. Right behind that comes the shower. You see Americans putting in fancy home theaters, and cheaping out on their bathrooms."

How much should you pay? For a good quality shower caddy, expect to pay on par with what you spent on your other shower fixtures, which, ideally, are also meant to last.

A surf through Amazon reveals caddies ranging in price from \$15 to \$1,500. Pricing for Sterlingham's caddies is on the higher side because they're handmade of brass, which won't rust. (Rust happens when iron meets water. Brass doesn't contain iron.) Their

triple-chrome plating means the thickness of the finish is above the standard, so won't flake or peel.

So for you, a quality-of-life bump may not come from a shower caddy, but rather from a chef-worthy set of knives

or a built-in closet system. Whatever your pleasure, occasionally life calls for an everyday splurge.

"Trust me," Jenkinson said. "You invest in a well-made, professionally installed shower caddy, and you will wonder why you ever settled for anything else." Here's what she said to look for in a caddy and why:

- Style and comfort. Any space looks and feels better when its organized, and that includes the shower, where a well-made, handsome and

functional caddy can corral shampoo, conditioner, a razor, soap and more. When choosing a caddy, ask what you want it to hold. Then choose one that matches the finishes in your bathroom and that scores high for form and function.

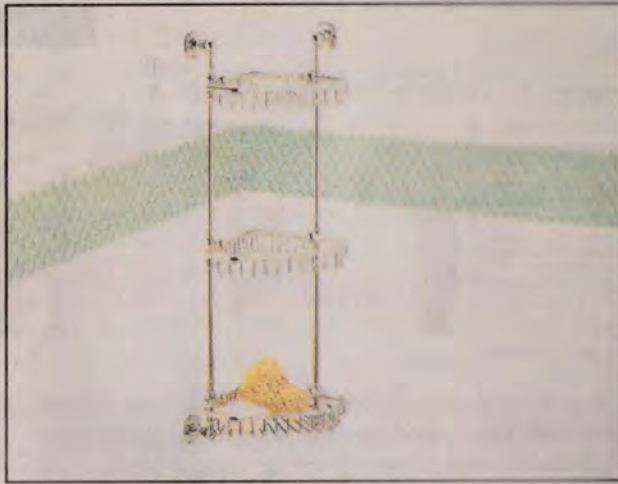
- Durable materials. You want long lasting and rust proof. "We live in such a throwaway society," Jenkinson said. "Many bath accessory makers focus on how cheaply they can make something and still sell for a profit. We try to make the finest quality. When you don't have to replace an item every two-to-five years, the more expensive one becomes the reasonable one."

- Strong attachment. Caddies that attach to the wall with screw mounts are sturdier than ones that hang or stand. Be sure it comes with proper hardware ready to install, then find that special someone. "Don't skimp on installation," she said.

- Commercial grade. Many products come in two grades: commercial (for restaurants, hotels and businesses) and residential. Residential lines are usually less expensive, but don't hold up as well as commercial grade, which is designed to take a beating.

- Careful cleaning. Avoid harsh cleaning products, said Jenkinson. "The chemicals cause finishes to pit. They should be banned." Wash with a soft cloth and water.

Syndicated columnist Marni Jameson is the author of three home and lifestyle books, including *Downsizing the Family Home — What to Save, What to Let Go* (Sterling Publishing). You may reach her at [www.marnijameson.com](http://www.marnijameson.com).



**Everyday splurge: Once you realize the difference a well-designed, well-made shower caddy like this one can make in your life, you won't settle for a plastic one again.** (PHOTO COURTESY OF STERLINGHAM)

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