

INTERIOR DESIGN

Furniture can be touched up or refinished following these tips

BY JAMES AND MORRIS CAREY FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

(AP) Aunt Edith was an expert when it came to acquiring and holding on to fine home furnishings. She bought wisely, collecting only high-quality items.

When Edith inherited a large dining room set, brother Morris proudly accepted her old dining room table and chairs that she and Uncle Bert had purchased as newlyweds 35 years earlier.

The table was a masterpiece as were the six matching chairs. The tabletop was solid oak and in excellent condition. The baroque design was unusual, and, except for stain wear at the edges, every piece looked factory fresh.

Several years passed and sometime just after the set's 45th birthday the grand old heirloom finally began to show signs of age.

So, a visit was made to the refinisher.

Beautiful finish

A modest sanding and new coats of stain and varnish resulted in a set that was more beautiful than ever. The nice thing about that piece of furniture and others made of solid wood is that they can be sanded, repaired, restained and varnished and kept looking new for hundreds of years.

Not all of our furniture is solid wood or as easy to maintain. Veneered furniture, laminated-covered furniture and furniture with a photo-finished surface are not subject to periodic overhauls. But, with a little patience most furniture can be become an heirloom if properly cared for and maintained.

One of the reasons for furniture replacement is that items become worn out. People tire of scratched furniture with varnish that is wearing off.

Often scratched furniture can be repaired with nothing more than plain old coffee. Dip a soft, clean cloth into a cup of black

coffee (it doesn't have to be hot), and wipe it on to the scratched surface. Suddenly light scratches on medium toned furniture will simply disappear. Of course, this depends on how hard the wood is and the color of the existing stain.

For darker wood, Old English furniture polish is good for scratches. When you look at the bottle it appears so dark brown in color that it almost looks black. It contains a dark colored ingredient that masks lightly scratched dark wood and hides imperfections beautifully. But sometimes, dark colored polish isn't enough.

(Note: the previously mentioned techniques and the methods to follow normally won't work if a coat of wax exists on the surface to be repaired. Turpentine or commercial furniture cleaner — not polish or wax — should be used to clean the surface before attempting to mask any scratch. Use caution; turpentine should be used in a well-

ventilated area. The aroma is less than pleasant, but usually dissipates quickly.)

More obvious scratches can be repaired with a wax pencil. These pencils are available in about every color imaginable. If a piece of the furniture to be repaired can be taken to the store, color-matching can take place.

Tough it up

Liquid touchup kits also are available. If you are artistic, you can purchase artist brushes, and custom-mix colors that can be painted onto the surface and protected with a light coat of clear polyurethane spray. Paints and stains can be mixed with drawing pens to achieve a realistic match. This technique known as faux-finishing is especially handy when using putty to patch larger tears and gouges.

Small dents easily can be repaired. Place a drop of water in the dent, cover it with a towel and apply heat with a clothes

iron set to medium. The iron will turn the droplet to steam and moisten the dent. Within 15 seconds, the dent will pop up and disappear.

(Caution: this repair only works on dents. It does not work on tears or gouges where the fibers of the wood have been torn.)

When you are repairing furniture and want to remove a small area of the finish, use 400- to 600-grit sandpaper. Sandpaper that is coarser than that can leave deep, ugly scratches.

Crazing, alligatoring or cracking (a finish that contains a pattern of fine cracks) also can be repaired. But this is a tougher task — one not recommended for the light of heart.

There are three common finishes that will alligator: shellac, lacquer and varnish. The three are quite different. To find out which is which, start by applying denatured alcohol. If the finish is shellac, denatured alcohol will dissolve it. If the surface is

lacquer, the alcohol will slowly soften (not dissolve) the lacquer thinner. Next, try the lacquer thinner. It will dissolve a lacquered surface and slowly soften a shellacked surface.

Since each solvent causes the non-matching finish to soften and swell, test it in an obscure area first. In contact with varnish, either solvent will cause swelling. For varnish, a very light sanding and a new coat of varnish will mask alligatoring.

Shellacked and lacquered surfaces don't have to be sanded or recoated. Alligatoring can be repaired with a technique known as amalgamation. Here an artist's paintbrush is used to carefully apply the appropriate solvent (alcohol to shellac and lacquer thinner to lacquer) to the crack lines until the finish softens and fills the cracks. Let the finish harden overnight, then buff with paste wax.

For more home improvement tips and information visit www.onthehouse.com.

CALENDAR

■ Residents of Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield, Walled Lake, Novi, South Lyon, Wixom and Lyon Township may gather items for the regional Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Drop Off Days scheduled this year. The items include used computer equipment, oil-based paint, pesticides, herbicides, cleaners, fluorescent light bulbs and other common household chemicals. The next HHW Drop Off Day will be Saturday, May 19, at the Southfield Civic Center, 26000 Evergreen, between 10 and 11 Mile. Hours are 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Residents in all Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County communities may participate. For more information, call the RRRASOC at

(248) 208-2270.

■ The League of Michigan Bicyclists has partnered with Art Van Furniture to provide information on bicycle safety, selecting the proper bikes for children, helmet safety and area events and trails. Experts from the league and local sporting goods stores will visit with guests, answer their biking questions and pass out information 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, May 19, at any Art Van store. Guests meeting with the experts will receive a set of safety reflectors as a gift (while supplies last). The event is free.

■ Learn how to react in an emergency involving your pet in *Pet First Aid*, a class taking place Wednesday, May 23, at the Rochester Community House,

818 Ludlow. Cost is \$16. Pre-registration is required, by mail or at RCH. Call (248) 651-0822 for information.

■ Haberman Fabrics, 117 W. Fourth in Royal Oak, presents a variety of home decorating classes. They include the three-session *Simple Upholstered Ottoman*, Wednesdays, May 23 to June 6, or Thursdays, May 24 to June 7 (\$45). Pre-registration is required. Call (248) 541-0010 or visit www.habermanfabrics.com

■ Stop in any Art Van Furniture store now through Thursday, May 17, and pick up coupons for \$2 off tickets for the May 17 performance of *Blue's Clues Live* at the Fox Theatre.

Home tours will benefit community symphonies

The communities of Dearborn and Plymouth have scheduled home tours this spring to benefit their respective symphonies.

Dearborn's Fairlane Woods will be the site of the Women's Association of the Dearborn Orchestral Society annual Heritage Home Tour 10 a.m.-6 p.m. May 19.

The Plymouth Symphony Spring Home Tour, "Architecture of the Millennium," will be showcasing seven homes in Plymouth, Northville and Novi from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday, June 3.

Plymouth tour

The seven homes include a variation of sizes, styles and decor.

A home on North Territorial features a 5,000-square-foot Cape Cod on five acres with a special feeding system for deer, while another home on the tour contains a two-story waterfall on the first and second levels with

an art gallery on the fourth floor.

Plymouth's Old Village will be featured with a home on Starkweather that's been restored to the Victorian era. Leonard Kim of the Plymouth Symphony will play a 1929 player grand piano.

Home renovators also will enjoy a traditional subdivision home on Charnwood renovated by homeowners.

Two other homes include 5,000 square foot of space, including a Cape Cod home with a 2,000 square foot finished lower level and a b-level, renovated and expanded with a country French theme.

A home in Novi on the tour resembles the styles of homes in the Palmer Woods section of Detroit.

Tickets are \$18 presale available at Colonial Card and Camera, located in the Kroger shopping center at Sheldon and Ann Arbor Road, and Gabriella's on Main Street in Plymouth and

Gardenviews on West Main Street in Northville.

For information, call K.C. Mueller at (734) 455-0075.

Dearborn tour

The Dearborn homes on tour are located in a wooded area off Hubbard Drive, west of Southfield and south of Ford Road. These homes offer residents the amenities of spacious new construction, privacy and convenient urban living.

The Fairlane Club, 5000 Fairlane Woods Drive, will serve as tour headquarters where free parking is available. Visitors can either walk or take a free shuttle to the homes. A buffet luncheon will be available 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Fairlane Club for \$10.

Tickets for the Dearborn tour are \$12 pre-event and \$15 on tour days. For information, call Marsha Movsesian at (313) 277-5624.



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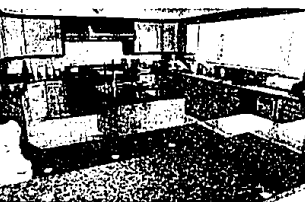
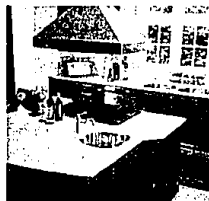
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