

Fabulous FURNITURE 2001

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purchased for a fraction of the cost of antique rugs. Style and color are the two most important factors in what sells area rugs, according to Jeremy Rockett, Shaw Rugs, manufacturer of mostly machine woven rugs made in Georgia.

Most people who buy area rugs are still buying traditional patterns, but generally in much more casual styles as opposed to more elaborate Victorian prints.

Tea wash, is a popular technique that gives dark rich colors, like forest greens and burgundies, a faded antique look. Sun washed area rugs offer more golds, taupes and caramel colors, which also focuses on a muted tone.

The real hard, bold contemporary styles have a softer flare and the traditional styles are less formal, more casual and contemporary.

New trends wake up sofa beds

BY SANDIE PARROTT
SPECIAL WRITER

Sofa sleepers, once the solution for where to put extra guests, aren't selling like they used to. Most of the area retailers agreed that sales were down significantly this year. Some didn't even have models on the sales floor.

Why are they losing popularity?

Changes in housing trends have led to their possible demise. In our area, homes are getting larger. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, new one-family, four-bedroom homes increased 14 percent while three-bedroom homes actually decreased. More families are building a permanent extra room instead of using a sofa bed in a multipurpose room.

Many competing products are also adding to the trend away from sofa beds.

Futons are popular for younger persons who aren't as

concerned about comfort and a traditional look. They are also significantly less expensive (\$200 to \$600) and much easier to move.

Airbeds are also very popular. They are relatively inexpensive (\$150 to \$250), and can be stored in a closet and quickly inflated whenever they are needed.

Furniture companies are also adding their own products that make sofa beds less attractive to buyers.

Pat McCormick at Thomasville Home Furnishings of Clarkston said that new trends toward longer length sofas with thicker and deeper depth seating make it possible to use them like single beds, at least on a temporary basis.

Many people are still buying sofa sleepers. The trend is leading away from the traditional, uncomfortable, bar-in-the-back sleepers. You can still buy the more inexpensive models with 3-inch mattresses and little sup-

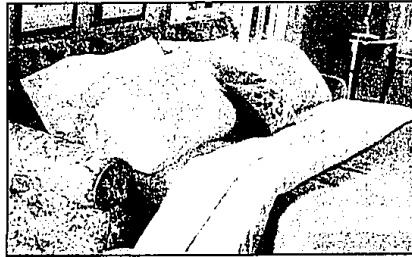


PHOTO COURTESY ETHAN ALLEN

Sweet dreams: This Ethan Allen sofa sleeper has a lively print with heavy duty construction, standard 6-1/2-inch thick mattress and TV position feature.

port, but they are harder to find and not recommended.

According to area retailers, people are buying queen-size sofa sleepers above all other sizes. It is big enough to fit just about everyone comfortably, yet it doesn't take up the whole room.

Manufacturers have introduced chair-and-a-half (single bed) sleepers for very limited spaces. Art Van Furniture calls them "Snugglers" because two people really have to sit close together. Carol Smith of Art Van in Waterford said they sell quite well.

Neutral colors are still very popular along with sage, plum and burgundy.

Coleen Gahry of Ethan Allen Interiors advises choosing styles and colors that span the seasons. Many people choose darker colors in winter or light colors in summer and aren't satisfied in the coming months.

Manufacturers are making sofa beds more comfortable and easier to use. Mattress depth

ranges from 4 inches for economy styles up to 6-1/2 inches for luxury sofas.

Innerspring mattresses without the uncomfortable bar are the best sellers. Some luxury models also have raised TV position headrests that lock into place.

La-Z-Boy will be introducing a new type of sleeper sofa with what it calls the Slumber Air Mattress System. The air mattress is attached to the top of the heavy gauge coil mattress. When it is inflated, it adds 5 inches of air comfort to 4 inches of mattress support, according to La-Z-Boy. The air mattress is supposed to inflate or deflate in less than 1 minute with a pump that attaches separately.

Prices and quality vary considerably, so it pays to shop around.

Depending on the fabric or leather chosen, the type and thickness of the mattress and the quality of the frame and overall construction, prices can vary from \$500 to \$2,600 for a full-size sleeper sofa.

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