

Fabulous FURNITURE 2002

Floor fashions

What's underfoot for the living room?

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If the hemline is the measurement of how fashion changes, then perhaps the home's equivalent is what's underfoot in the living room.

Homeowners before the 1950s mostly had hardwood to pad about upon. In the '60s and '70s, wall-to-wall carpet was hip, and in some homes, the shaggier, the better.

The '80s took a conservative turn, where wood and area rugs lived together happily. The '90s saw a rebirth of new types of carpets that were soft, plush and elegant.

That plush elegance is still apparent now, but the pendulum is swinging once again to wood floors.

"We do a lot of tearing out of carpet in great rooms," said Lance Foster, owner of Forest Floors in Waterford. "Rich, deep wood warms up a house and improves the feel."

Dana Easton, owner of Woods of the World in Birmingham, says that in addition to introducing a slightly more formal feel, wood gives rooms a distinct sound.

"Sounds seem muffled in a carpeted room; with wood, it seems crisper," she said.

In vaulted great rooms, some homeowners might find the acoustics too boomy, but Foster likens it to the melodious echo of an acoustic guitar.

Sound quality aside, one thing that wood does offer is easy cleanup. And for those concerned with allergens in the environment, dust and pet dander are easy to remove from wood.

CARPETING

Jeremy Dantzer, a sales associate with F & N Floor Covering in Troy, says hardwood floors have shown the greatest increase in sales, but he also emphasizes carpeting is cost-effective.

"It's a matter of personal preference," he said.

One of Dantzer's best-selling carpets right now is frieze, a tightly twisted nylon yarn that wears well and maintains its shape. Though it's about 20 percent more expensive than other brands, it is excellent in high traffic areas.

Ed Baran, owner of Plymouth Floor Covering in Livonia, says he has seen a 15-percent increase in the sale of hardwood floors and area rugs in the past year. But he also notes that carpet is much more forgiving if you have small children and need a soft surface for landing.

"Carpet is still an excellent value," he said.

And with good care, which includes regular vacuuming and professional cleaning every year, a carpet should last seven to 10 years.

Baran says that customers often look to carpet "special spaces" in something wild and daring, like animal prints, but generally, one neutral-colored carpet throughout the house will do. One color allows for lots of flexibility when it comes to redecorating.

Jack Baldner, manager of A.R. Kramer, with stores in Canton and Livonia, says that a popular choice for family rooms is Berber carpet.

"There are many new patterns and colors," he said. He said that many people are choosing lighter colors because

SURFING FOR CARPET

The internet is a great source to learn about floor covering.

- Don't know the difference between a cut pile and level loop, or a Saxony and Frieze? The Web site carpet.org features explanations of many types of cuts and fibers, along with a guide to shopping for carpet, choosing colors and removing stains.
- Floorbiz.com is a portal to more than 50 carpet, tile and wood flooring brands. It also features a product guide where you can search for items such as cleaning and restoration equipment.
- Floorfacts.com explains about fibers and manufacturer labels such as Wear-dated and Stainmaster. It also features virtual room designers and gives tips for

choosing between a hardwood and laminate floor.

- Carpetcave.com provides links to Mohawk, Shaw and Beaulieu of America brands, along with wood flooring and fiber manufacturers.
- Other sites you can access directly include:
 - Antron.Dupont.com
 - Karastan.com
 - MillikenCarpet.com
 - abbeycarpet.com
 - Mohawk-floorscopes.com
 - Stainmaster.com
 - The Carpet and Rug Institute Web site, carpet-rug.com, tells how to pick a professional cleaner and offers a guide for minimizing allergens.
 - The National Wood Flooring Association Web site is nwf.org

the technology of the fiber has made it easier to clean.

SPECIAL SPACES

For Easton of Woods of the World, designing "special spaces" is one of her company's mainstays.

At her 5,000-square-foot showroom on Lincoln in Birmingham, across from the ice arena, Easton can show you a sample selection of borders and inlays that she terms "floor art."

"To make a living room more formal, we've used a herringbone design," she said.

When a customer came in with an antique to showcase, an area was created with wood to look like its own sitting area, with the wood inlaid to look like an area rug.

Woods of the World is an apt name for the company that literally gets its woods from all over the world. Aniagra from Africa, White Ivory wood from South America and Rose River gum from Australia are just a few of the 125 varieties of its domestic and exotic woods.

Easton says she buys only from mills that pledge their product is from managed forests, not clear cutters. She says her most unique order was for African ebony, which sells by the pound.

Easton can do pretty much any kind of wood and any kind of design you want.

"A lot of times, people will mix different species around the hearth, or use a border around the room," she said. That's an easy way to tie a great room together.

Foster of Forest Floors says in addition to hardwoods, he's seeing wood flooring products come out faster than he can keep up.

"Engineered laminates, unlike hardwood, are virtually impervious to stains and denting," he said.

And you can even get wood

laminates that look like ceramic and exotic woods.

As far as cleanup, Foster's rule of thumb is, "If you wouldn't put it on your windows, don't put it on your wood floor." A mixture of vinegar and water rubbed out with a dry sock works best.

As far as cost, laminates can often cost more than hardwood, depending on the type of wood. While prices vary wildly based on product and installation costs, expect to pay anywhere between \$8 and \$20 a square foot.

AREA RUGS

The added option you have with hardwood floors is that you can add an area rug to soften up the space.

All Safaoui, owner of Value Carpet, which has stores in Detroit, Livonia, Eastpointe and Hazel Park, says area rugs are very popular with wood and ceramic floors.

"Area rugs are used to accessorize. When you change the color of a room, you can buy an area rug," he said.

And this fall there are many new designs, with prices ranging from \$200 for an 8-by-10 foot to \$3,000 and more for hand-crafted wool. Area rugs are also an excellent way to break up a great room into more intimate spaces.

Safaoui says that many of his customers come prepared to shop after having done their homework on the internet.

"It does make it easier when they come prepared knowing what they want," he said.

Certainly with the wide selection of soft fiber carpets, and the numerous ways to dress up a floor with wood, homeowners have plenty of options underfoot.

And it's only a question of time before the pendulum of floor fashion swings back to knee-deep shag. Be patient, or perhaps, be afraid.

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Here's how to display personal objects

What would the house be without all of your knickknacks, treasures, collections and photographs to make it truly home?

As you go through life you manage to collect all kinds of objects to put on display. Oftentimes you cannot display it all, so it's best if you determine before you start to decorate what has potential and what should be put into storage.

Arranging accessories does-

n't have to be difficult. With a few guidelines you should be on the road to success. Here is what you should look for, courtesy of WomensForum.com:

1. Evaluate items for color, perspective and height.
2. Accessorize one area at a time from the collection.
3. Vary the heights of the objects to be used together to stagger the altitude. Groups of three often work best. One of

these can be greenery.

4. Don't line up two or more items of the same size unless you are arranging the interior of your china cabinet. Even in the china cabinet, you would want to break up the line of plates by placing teacups in front of them.
5. A clever way to add height to an item that is too small is to sit it upon two or three stacked books or a box.