

Enjoying nature's fabrics

Which fabric is which? What to choose for what purpose? Then, how to care for it?

"The polyester generation needs a lesson," says Janice Morse, manager of Bonwit Teller's Designer Salon.

"Every season something new comes in and every fabric has its advantages and its disadvantages." Ms. Morse gives periodic seminars to Bonwit Teller's sales personnel to keep up to date with new labels, new trademarks, new fabrics. They, in turn help customers learn how to shop for the garment with the fabric

that best fits their need and how to care for it.

Now she shares her expertise with our readers.

Fibers are divided into two main categories; naturals and man-made.

The naturals are cotton, made from the cotton plant; wool, coming from sheep and other animals; linen from the flax plant, and silk from the silk worm.

The man-made fibers are cellulose, made from plant leftovers, and non-cellulosic, which are entirely

man-made, from gas, coal, air and water.

Cotton is soft and light weight. It absorbs and evaporates body moisture. It launders easily and accepts dye well, but lacks the wash and wear property, so it wrinkles. It has the ability to transfer perspiration away from the body, and it is flammable.

Chemical processing on natural cotton can make it fire retardant and stain resistant.

If it carries the mercerized label, it is fine cotton with a luster. The sanforized label guarantees it will shrink less than two per cent.

When pressing, a dampened cloth works better than steam. All cotton takes a high iron heat, but if your cotton is blended, turn the heat down a notch or two.

Wool is considered the ideal fabric. In the winter it soaks up dampness and in the summer it absorbs perspiration. It does not easily wrinkle or lose shape. Hanging overnight will generally restore its shape. Moths like it because of its high protein content.

Wool garments should be allowed to rest for 24 hours after each wearing.

Ms. Morse suggests dry cleaning. Washing is too tricky. Spots must be blotted immediately, either with a damp cloth and mild soap or cold water, or cleaning fluid.

If you have a grease spot on wool, apply some talc, let it stand overnight, then brush off.

Silk can be washed unless the instructions say definitely no. Wash by hand using lukewarm water and a mild detergent.

Dyes in some silk are affected by sunlight and perspiration. And even the best of silk may yellow with age.

Linen can be washed either by hand or machine. If your garment is put in a dryer, remove it when it's damp. Then iron damp, on the right side, to bring out its luster.

Rayon absorbs moisture, takes dye well, is colorfast, has drapability and blends well when used in other fab-

rics, but it is generally not washable.

Acetate is delicate and its major use is in linings. It can completely dissolve with using some perfumes on it.

Triacetate is similar to acetate and can withstand a lot of heat. It is machine wash and dry, needs little ironing, and its trademark is Arnel.

Nylon hose took the place of silk hose in 1939 and have been with us ever since.

Qiana is nylon, and though it has good recovery from any abuse, it has no moisture absorbency, so it is hot. It is also lightweight, and consequently used in windbreakers.

When washing, drying or ironing, use a sensitive heat. Heavily soiled areas should be penetrated with a paste of detergent and water before washing. Grease or oil must be removed before washing or dry-cleaning with a cleaning fluid. When machine washing, Ms. Morse suggests removing the garment before the final spin cycle and letting it drip dry.

Polyester is wrinkle resistant, is wash and wear, blends well with other fibers, is strength resistant to abrasion, resists perspiration, and will retain pleats set by heat.

Its big disadvantage is that once oil and grease touch it, they are inclined to hang on.

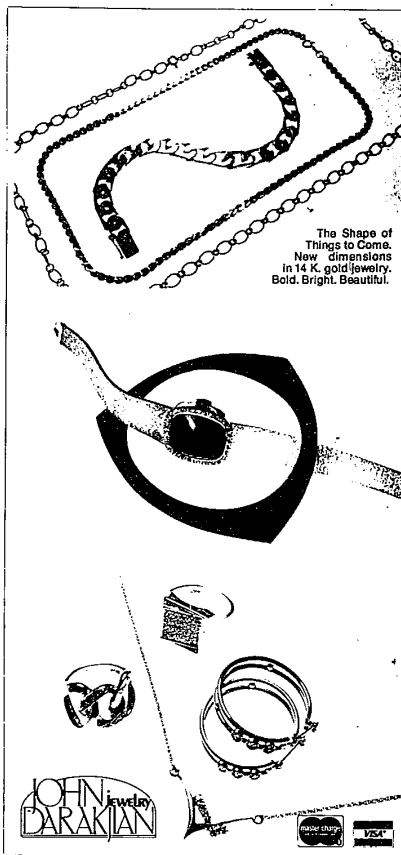
Wash in warm water, and use a warm, not hot, dryer.

Acrylic is a synthetic substitute for wool. It is warm, lightweight, colorfast and durable. It can be washed or dry-cleaned, but if you are hand washing, use a fabric softener.

One of the most often asked questions put to Ms. Morse and her staff is: "What is the difference between wash and wear, and permanent press?"

Wash and wear, she explained, derives its properties from the fiber itself. Permanent press has a finish put on the fiber.

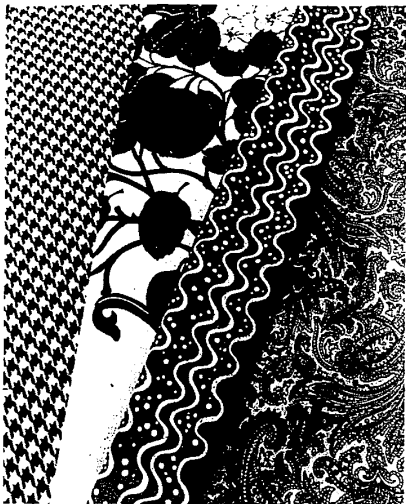
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Pure wool, pure linen, a pure cotton border print and pure printed silk are making a return in consumer preference this fall. These can be found at Hinkle's of Farmington. (Photo by Harry Mauthe)

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