

Continued from Page 10

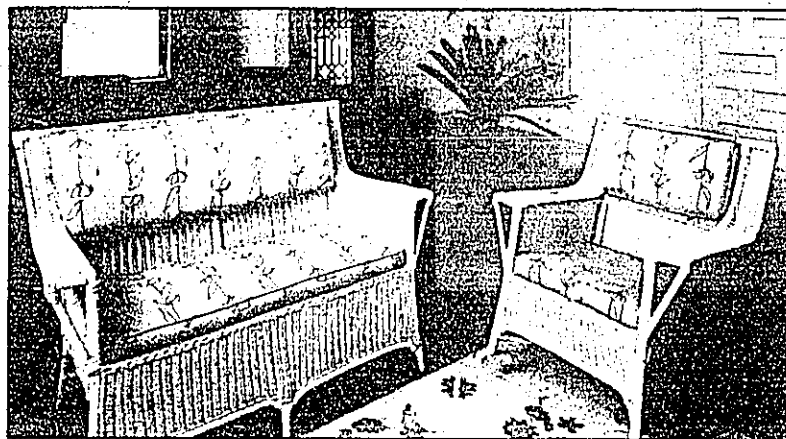
ceramic tile is these days. It's everywhere — kitchens, baths, foyers, family rooms and dining rooms.

Although it is generally more expensive than carpeting, tile is a better investment since it lasts indefinitely and is virtually indestructible. As with wall coverings, tile comes in a variety of colors, styles, sizes, shapes and textures.

Tile is available glazed or unglazed, patterned or plain, matte or textured finish. The majority of ceramic tile comes from Italy and Mexico, although other countries such as Holland and France are beginning to export it. Many of the decorative tiles are hand-crafted.

Real and simulated stone are popular floor tiles, along with the more expensive granite, marble and slate. Marble is particularly popular right now and has become more affordable with the advent of smaller, less expensive tiles.

Tile can jazz up even the most ordinary room. Designers suggest you mix, match or contrast tile or install it on a diagonal for an interesting effect. You might also opt for a contrasting grout color.



Yesteryear's design favorites, including refreshing white wicker, are making a comeback. Shown here, wicker settee and rocker updated with fabric by Original Textile Designs Inc.

lay your tile, or, if you're ambitious, do it yourself.

Experts recommend, however, that unless you've installed tile before, you should start with a small area, such as a bathroom, before tackling an entry way or dining room.

Tile can be installed over most floor surfaces, including old tile, but you need either a wood, concrete or plaster-

board base.

Tile is sold by the square foot and individual pieces, ranging in price from about \$3 to \$25. Decorative or hand-painted tiles are usually priced separately.

Selecting a carpet is a major decision, not only because of its cost, but also because of its importance to the room.

When choosing a color scheme, take

into consideration the walls, window treatments and furnishings, and determine the illusion you wish to create.

Wall-to-wall carpeting, for example, tends to expand the space of a room. In very small rooms, the walls should be the same light color as the carpet. Larger rooms can be made more intimate with carpeting that is rich in color.

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