

Fabulous Flooring Pay Attention to what's under foot

By Elizabeth Scheibner
Copley News Service

In the proverbial good old days, no one paid much attention to carpeting. Its purpose was more functional than decorative.

Today, that's all changed. In recent years, carpeting has become one of the most versatile decorating tools around. Not only is the quality much better, but the choices are virtually endless, ranging from colorful plaids and elegant florals to sensuous velvets and stylish textures.

Thanks to innovations in fiber technology, carpet is also more durable than ever before. Virtually every manufacturer now offers carpeting that is anti-static, stain-resistant and low-sheen. In addition to the wide range of colors and patterns available, consumers also have a choice of fibers, including wool, nylon, cotton, polyester, acrylic and the newest contender, polypropylene (a form of plastic).

Designers say carpeting alone can change the entire look of a room, turning an otherwise Spartan room into something warm and cozy or transforming an ordinary room into an elegant retreat.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The old adage, "You get what you

pay for," certainly holds true for carpeting. Sacrificing quality in order to save a few hundred dollars is not particularly smart since most poorly crafted carpets will stain and show signs of wear in a short period of time.

That's why experts suggest you buy the best carpet you can afford.

Carpet comes either tufted or woven. In general, woven carpet is more stable and resilient, but also more expensive. If you are buying tufted carpet, make sure that it has enough fiber per yard. For example, a carpet with 48 ounces of fiber per square foot will last longer than one with only 28 ounces.

To assess quality and durability, look at the thickness or density of the carpet. Press your thumb firmly into the pile; the quicker it recovers, the denser the carpet. Another way to check density is to bend the carpet back in a fold. If you see any of the backing, you will know that it is not high-quality.

When buying carpet, many people make the mistake of trying to match their carpeting to an existing piece of furniture. This can be a costly mistake.

While it's important to take into consideration your existing color scheme, you don't want to invest \$4,000 in new carpeting to go with a \$300 chair.

FABULOUS FLOORING
- Many homeowners are drawn to the timeless beauty and durability of hardwood floors.

If you're not sure what color to choose, your best advice is to select carpeting that is a neutral shade. Try to stay away from trendy colors that will only look passé five years from now (who can forget the avocado green fad of the 1970s?).

Keep in mind that the small swatches you see in the stores look a lot different when applied to an entire floor. For example, the teal green you like so much in a 12-inch square may look hideous in a 12-by-16-foot room.

Before making any decision, experts suggest you bring home several samples to see how they look during the day and at night.

While the trend used to be to have the same carpeting in all rooms of the house, designers quickly realized how impractical it was for most families.

One of the most important factors to consider when buying carpeting is how much traffic the room normally gets.

Master bedrooms, for example, which tend to get very little traffic, can usually handle softer, less-hardy carpet



in lighter colors. Dining rooms, children's rooms and stairs, on the other hand, demand darker, more resilient covering.

One of the hottest looks today is sisal, which is woven from coconut. Although expensive, many designers like the look of sisal for the texture and warmth it gives a room without being overly intrusive.

Also growing in popularity are patterned carpets and borders. Many carpet manufacturers now offer colorful, durable carpeting just for kids - including those with clowns, teddy bears, sailboats, toy soldiers, zoo animals and other motifs.

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