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EC71-1149 Fabrics for Curtains and Draperies

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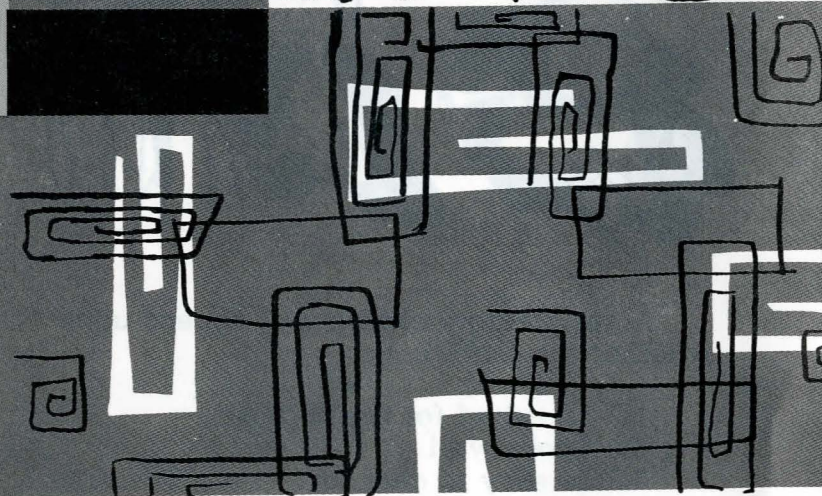
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FABRICS

for

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Extension Service
University of Nebraska College of Agriculture
Cooperating with the U. S. Department of Agriculture
and the College of Home Economics
E. F. Frolik, Dean J. L. Adams, Director

FABRICS

for

CURTAINS and DRAPERIES

by Magdalene Pfister,
Extension Specialist in Home Furnishings

There are many kinds of fabrics to choose from for window treatment. In both yard goods and ready-mades you'll find interesting textures, beautiful patterns, new finishes and coordinated colors. Before buying, you need to:

1. Decide on what you want and need.
2. Shop and make comparisons.
3. Read and interpret labels.
4. Ask questions.



A satisfactory choice will depend upon whether the fabric:

1. Is suited for the purpose.
2. Looks well.
3. Is easy to care for.
4. Is durable.

Suited for Purpose

In a room with strong light, sheer glass curtains prevent glare by softening or diffusing the light. Glass curtains of less transparent material will screen an unattractive view or give privacy from neighbors or passersby.

Draperies offer greater variety in color, design and texture than glass curtains and so are more important in the decorative scheme of a room. By day, draperies can be used effectively to frame a view. Drawn across a window at night, they give greater privacy than glass curtains and may create a different decorative effect.

One of the first steps in planning is to decide what you want curtains to do for the room. This decision furnishes a guide to the kind of fabric to choose. Will the purpose be served best by glass curtains or draperies, or are both needed? Should the material be sheer or non-sheer?

Looks Well

Window hangings should hang in soft folds, keep their size and color and have good design if figured.

Judge the draping quality of the fabric. There should be enough body to look well, especially at a large window. Heavier, more dense fabrics should not be bulky. Those hung on traverse rods must look well when closed and must be pliable enough to hang in compact, deep folds when drawn back.

Hangings must be wide enough to cover the space and to hang in graceful folds. Sheer fabrics need triple fullness, while twice the width of the space to be covered is usually enough for heavier fabric.

Some guarantee of color fastness is desirable. Note on the label the kind of color fastness, whether to light, fumes, washing or dry cleaning.

Vat dyes result in fast colors. Solution dyed synthetics are resistant to fading. Yarn dyed fibers are more likely to permanent color than piece dyed fabrics.

Fabrics may shrink with changes in humidity as well as with cleaning. A cloth labeled "not to exceed two per cent residual shrinkage" will not shrink more than 3/4 inch per yard.

If a pattern is selected consider the quality of its design. The type of design should be in keeping with the yarn and weave as well as with the flat, pliable and continuous nature of cloth. This suggests that delicate patterns are suitable for material with fine yarn and weave, while bold patterns are better for coarse materials. Uninterrupted patterns are better than separate motifs which appear "spotty." Motifs that resemble real objects and strong three dimensional enrichment are generally out of place. Enough depth, however, is needed on the flat surface for interest. In good quality printed fabric the printed design is on the grain of material so that lengths can be cut on the true grainline to hang and clean well.

Lining draperies will usually improve their appearance. It helps them to hang in soft folds and to show the pattern more clearly. A lining protects them from dust and sun.

If the drapery is to be unlined be sure the pattern is not objectionable from the outside and that it doesn't look faded as the light comes through when seen from the inside.

When buying ready-made draperies be sure that the design is matched in each pair and that the arrangement of the design units is the same in all pairs. When buying figured material, remember to allow enough fabric for matching the design.

Easy to Care For

Many special finishes are being used to improve the appearance of the fabric and to make it more useful. Some give crispness, which lasts the life of the fabric. Some prevent slipping or shifting of yarns and so keep the fabric in shape after laundering. Some finishes repel moisture. These are especially desirable where windows are open much of the time or when there is much humidity.

Durability

Fabrics used at windows may be affected by light, heat, moisture, abrasive wear, air-borne soil and microorganisms. The resistance to these conditions is largely determined by the fibers used, the way they are twisted and spun and the way the cloth is woven and finished.

Fibers vary in their resistance to sunlight and even the same fiber may vary with different construction and conditions of use. Bright fibers have better resistance than dull ones.

The yarn and fabric construction can also affect the rate of deterioration. Usually the more the individual fabric is exposed to sunlight the less resistant it is. The finer the yarn, the less resistant to deteriorative light. The looser the weave, the less resistant to light.

Heat and moisture hasten deterioration of curtain fabrics. The "brown line" effect resulting from moisture drying in the fabric may contribute to the softening of cellulose fibers.

Look for more nearly balanced construction between warp and filling yarns. Strain is placed on a fine warp when the filling is heavier. If there is not more than ten threads' difference in warp and filling the fabric is considered as having good balance.

Fiber content gives an indication of durability and the care of fabric. In a blend the fabric is generally treated as the fiber which occurs in the greatest per cent. The Textiles Products Fiber Identification Act requires that fabric be identified by its generic (family) name. The percentage of fiber by weight must be listed.

Following is a summary of fibers:



Shop & Make Comparisons

When you shop for curtains or draperies, one authority* suggests that you establish a value rating for each possible choice by considering the extent to which it satisfies your "wants and needs and ease of care."

Consider your household environment and list the "needs" as to size, type, sheer-ness, color and appearance. There may be other properties that you "want" but do not absolutely need, such as crispness, double stitched hems or long service. "Care" should be considered. Must the fabric be dry cleaned, will it resist soil? If drip dried, do you have room for hanging? These factors, together with the amount of money to spend, will give you the value rating.

Thus:

$$\text{Value} = \frac{\text{Needs} + \text{Wants} + \text{Care}}{\text{Dollars}}$$

Read & Interpret Labels

Labels will indicate the fiber or fibers and percentage of each if more than one is used.

Special qualities such as color fastness, kind of finishes, how long finish will last and the care they should have may also be given.

Save the label for reference.

Ask Questions

The following questions will help you decide:

1. Will the fabric hang in graceful folds?
2. How can it be cleaned?
3. Will the material shrink or stretch?
4. Is the material colorfast to sunlight, washing or dry cleaning?
5. Does it have the finish you need? (Is it crease resistant, fire resistant, and moisture resistant? Is the finish permanent?)
6. Is the color suitable to the room in which you plan to use it?
7. Is the pattern in proportion to the size of your room and furnishings?
8. Is the texture of the material in harmony with the walls and other furnishings in the room?
9. Is it the best quality material for the money spent?

* Jules Labarthe in a talk at the National Home Furnishings Conference.

CLUES TO WINDOW FABRICS

FIBER AND PRIME CONSTITUENTS	SOME TRADE NAMES	PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	ABRASION RESISTANCE	DYEABILITY	CREASE RETENTION	WRINKLE RESISTANCE	DURABILITY	RESISTANCE TO HEAT	RESISTANCE TO FIRE	EFFECT OF SUNLIGHT	DIMENSIONAL STABILITY	CARE AND CLEANING SPECIFICATIONS
100% Acetate	Acele, Celalof, Celanese, Estron SLR, Loftura	Soft, lustrous drapes well	Fair	Fair for Acetates	Fair to Excellent	Good	Fair	Fair, tends to lose strength at high heats. Melts at 450°F.	Fair	Excellent color-fastness in solution dyes. Average for regular acetates	Good	Dry clean primarily. Can be hand washed in some constructions. No-iron finishes can be applied.
Cotton linters or wood pulp treated to form cellulose acetate												
Solution-Dyed. Acetate (same as above)	Avicolor, Celara, Celaperm, Chronspun											
100% Acrylic	Orlon, Creslan, Acrilan, Zefran	Soft and drapes well	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Excellent	Susceptible. Iron only at low heat. Softens at 300° to 325°F.	Does not support combustion	Darkens after long exposure	Very good	Hand washable. Dry clean primarily. Resists spotting. Holds crease when wet. Dries rapidly. Iron at low temperatures.
Ammonia, gas, salt water and air												
Modacrylic (same as above)	Dynel, Verel											
100% Cotton Natural Fiber		Drapes well	Good	Good	Poor	Poor	Good	Excellent	Poor	Fair	Good if processed	Machine and hand washable. Needs ironing unless treated for drip-dry, no iron finish.
100% Glass Fibers Sand, Lime, Borax and Clay	Fiberglas, Pittsburgh, PPG	Drapes well, translucent	Fair to Good	Fair to Good	Poor	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Fireproof	None	Excellent	Washable. Drip dry, no-iron. Dries rapidly.
100% Linen Natural fiber from flax		Drapes well	Fair	Fair	Very good	Poor unless treated	Very good	Excellent	Fair	Good	Very good	Washes and cleans easily.
100% Polyester Petroleum, natural gas, air, water	Dacron, Fortrel, Kodol, Vycron	Drapes well	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Melts at 480° F.	Melts before burning	Excellent behind glass. Loses strength after long exposure.	Excellent when properly heat set.	Washable. Holds crease when wet. Spots wash off in water. Needs little ironing.
100% Rayon Wood Pulp to cotton linters reduced to liquid form	Avron, Englo, Bemberg, Drapespun, Fibro, Nub-lite, Fortisan	Drapes well	Fair to Good	Excellent	Poor to Fair	Fair	Fair to Good	Excellent. Loses strength at above 450° F. Decomposes above 500° F.	Burns relatively fast, depending on the construction.	Excellent for solution dyes. Average for regular rayons.	Fair	Hand washing to dry cleaning recommended.
Solution Dyed Rayon (same as above)	Coloray, Dylok, Jetspun, Cupracolor											
Modified Rayon (same as above)	Avicolor, Avril, Lirelle, Zantrel											
												Washable (often blended with cotton or polyesters).