



Furniture & Decor

Magic Carpets

Natural fiber rugs are clean, comfortable and beautiful

BY SHERYLL ALEXANDER

Natural rugs will floor you. A great rug under your feet makes you feel better about living, doesn't it?

There's something about knowing that a beautiful piece of art - especially something handmade - is gently caressing your most deserving feet, as well as keeping your home spaces warm, cozy and clean.



Natural area rugs are increasing in popularity as more homeowners grow aware of global warming and the need to use Earth-friendly products. This trend is also akin to getting back to floor design basics, which for centuries featured some type of hard floor surface such as wood, marble, tile, or adobe layered with handcrafted rugs constructed from artisans well-versed in using natural materials like wool, hemp, jute, sisal, bamboo and sea grass.

Eco-friendly rugs

Deb Bodinus (4greendesign.com) a "green" interior designer in Orange County, says rugs create a sense of softness and add to the warmth, comfort and soundproofing of a room. After her brother's recent death from cancer and her concerns about global environmental issues, Bodinus committed to using mostly Earth-friendly products, furniture and accessories in her designs.

Bodinus says rugs made from natural products contribute to air purity by absorbing toxic fumes emitted by various synthetic materials found

throughout the average home.

“Besides, wool provides long-last wear, is naturally soil, stain, mold and mildew-resistant, as well as having naturally flame-resistance and water-repellent properties,” she adds.

David-Michael says he has always been a natural fiber advocate. “Rugs fabricated from natural fibers can be eco-friendly as well as provide the best performance and aesthetic beauty in a room,” he says. “I always design with timeless patterns, colors and style whether my design is modern, transitional or traditional.”

Products and sources

The best environmental solution, suggests Bodinus, is purchasing area rugs made from natural fibers such as hand-knotted wool or silk. “Avoid rugs made with synthetic fibers and/or rugs with a chemical-laden synthetic backing,” says Bodinus. “And don't forget to use a rug gripper under your area rugs to keep them from slipping and moving,” she says, recommending 100 percent natural rubber latex grippers from Eco Terric (eco-terric.com).

What about modular carpet tiles? “You can buy carpet panels that look like wall-to-wall carpeting,” says Bodinus, who recommends 100 percent recyclables from Milliken (millikencarpet.com), which have a built-in, non-slip floor pad that creates a firm hold to the floor.

Hemphill's Rugs & Carpets in Costa Mesa is one of Orange County's best places to find a large selection of natural fiber area rugs. Hand-woven rugs provide durability, longevity and are better for the environment, says co-owner Cherie Hemphill, who notes that large sisal and sea grass rugs are very popular. H&O

Natural rug materials

- Wool is a soft and durable fiber acquired from the hair of sheep, goats and other animals. Wool rugs clean well and are a practical choice for dirt-prone areas.
- Cotton is a natural fiber made from the seedpod of the cotton plant.
- Sisal is a coarse fiber derived from the Agave cactus plant. It is durable and ideal for high-traffic areas.

- Hemp fiber is like cotton but stronger. Fiber from the hemp plant is naturally resistant to rot and mildew and will soften with wear.
- Coco palm fiber is manufactured from plantation-grown coconut palm trees. These rugs are woven much like those from sisal fibers, but coco palms may provide the most durability.
- Sea grass is grown in sea water-flooded fields and spun into stain- and dirt-resistant strands. Sea grass helps create healthy indoor humidity levels.
- Silk is a protein fiber produced by silkworms which is lustrous, tough and elastic. The fibers are woven into a yarn, thread or fabric.
- Flokati is the traditional long fiber sheep's wool rugs of Greece.