

From Rags to Rugs



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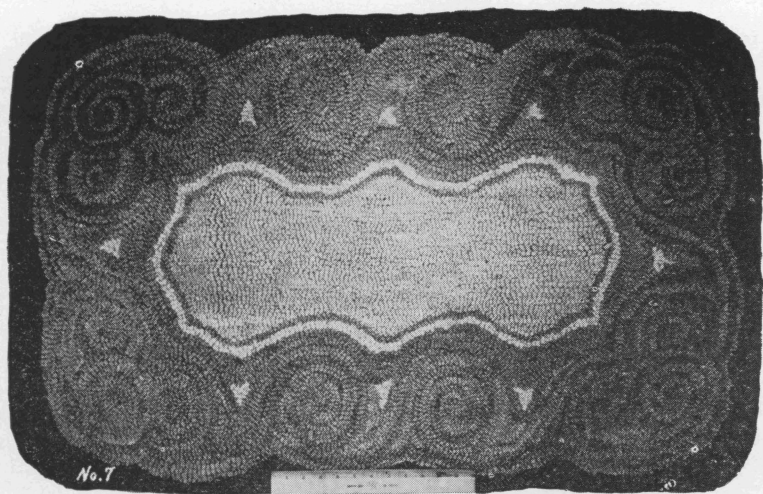
by

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“**H**OW to adorn the simple home and make it appear like a palace,” is one of the arts of homemaking and in it the choice and use of floor coverings play an important part. When the homemaker opens the door of her house, the guest receives an impression of comfort, beauty and charm if the rugs fit into the environment as they should. If they are looked upon as a part of the foundation of the room, like the floor, they will be a little darker in tone than the walls. And if the colors of the rugs have been carefully related to the color of the room and to that of the floor they will give a feeling of unity and restfulness. If they have been chosen so that they fulfill their purpose well, they will be of sufficient size so as not to appear as spots on the floor. They will also conform to the space and use assigned to them with pleasing proportions in relation to the furniture with which they are grouped.



A group of well made rugs of pleasing designs made by a home demonstration club woman.



Hooked rugs offer a real opportunity for the expression of the individual rug maker's sense of beauty, color and proportion. Wool is especially recommended for making good rugs, but only material of the same fiber should be used—that is, all wool or all cotton.

Plan Size and Shape and Color to Suit Use

IN order to achieve this pleasing effect the homemaker must determine in advance the size and shape and probable use of her rugs. It should be remembered that the rug used in front of her fireplace should be approximately as long as the hearth. The space beside a bed requires a somewhat larger rug than one designed to be placed in front of the dresser, while a still smaller rug is suitable for the doorway. As a general rule an oval rug fits in better with most furnishings than a round one and rectangular rugs are more usable than square ones.

With practical adaptation of the colonial house and its furnishings to present day use have come much interest and enthusiasm for early American arts and crafts and with this naturally has developed interest in the rugs of that period. This revival of the popularity of the handmade rugs of grandmother's day is convenient and very economical since the making of these rugs requires the simplest of equipment and household "left overs and cast offs" often provide ample material. Then, too, the sale of homemade rugs of good workmanship frequently can supply money needed for other phases of home improvement.

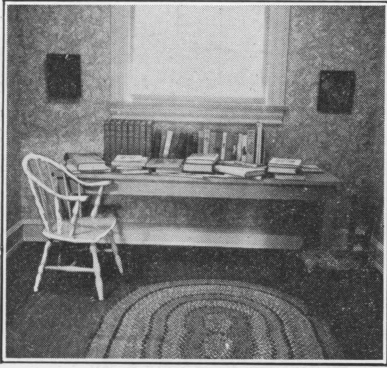
Either braided or hooked rugs may properly be used in farm homes, cottages and larger houses of the colonial type. They are suitable for any room of the house provided they harmonize with the other furnishings of the room. Particularly in a bedroom, where a smoothly finished floor with several small rugs is often considered the most practical, these hand-made rugs offer serviceable and distinctive floor coverings.

Many Materials Make Good Rugs

Wool, cotton, silk and linen materials have all been used for making braided and hooked rugs, but the first is the best. Only material of the same fiber should be used in a rug—that is, all wool or all cotton. No matter what the material is, care should be taken to eliminate those portions which are badly



The making of hooked rugs requires the simplest equipment.



For the children's room, substantial braided rugs are excellent, resisting the wear of sturdy little boots.

worn, otherwise that part of the rug will soon wear out while the rest is still quite good. Also, regardless of the type material used, it must be cleaned before it is torn into strips for rug making.

Braided and hooked rugs both may be made of old woolen blankets and garments such as suits, coats and dresses. The more flimsy materials such as challis and wool crepe should be used for hooked rugs only. Corduroy makes a beautiful braided rug but it is not suitable for hooking as it is too hard and its cotton back cannot always be hidden. Knitted garment of wool are especially pleasing in hooked rugs, but only the heavy, very closely knit materials can be used for braided rugs.

Only closely woven cotton materials of good body and weight should be used in the construction of braided rugs if wear and the best results are to be obtained. Avoid the loose, open mesh knitted cotton materials for either braided or hooked rugs. The results will not be satisfactory for the rug will give poor return for the labor of making it; it will be flimsy, and will soon wear out.

Old faded overalls, blue and gray shirts, and a good quality of children's ribbed cotton hose and underwear can be used with pleasing effect in hooked rugs.

Discarded silk garments of good strength, whether knitted or woven, may be used for rugs but silk is not recommended; the life of such cloth used in this way is short and the labor could be better spent working on more substantial materials. If silk is used in a braided rug it must be all woven or all knitted, but in a hooked rug a combination of both may be used to advantage, giving interesting quality and texture.

On Color Combination Depends Beauty

A few colors may wisely be used in a single rug, especially by beginners. After some experience it is possible with skill and a keen color sense to combine many lovely colors producing delightful effects, but before that can be done the rug maker must play with colors, putting this one and that one together; adding another one or two or three; taking away those which do not blend; studying this combination and that one before deciding definitely and venturing into the construction of a rug.

In choosing colors, it is to be remembered that among the most admired features of the early handmade rugs are the lovely soft, rich shades which have endured through the years. Strong intense colors should be used with the greatest care. Small areas may be made more interesting by the use of an intense color, but this use calls for a neutral effect in the background to balance the brilliant hue. Because an intense color can be braided in with two strands of a neutral shade, contrast is more often employed in braided rugs to develop design than in hooked rugs.

Makers of rugs can secure help in developing a feeling for combinations of colors by studying beautiful fabrics and the colored pictures so freely used in magazines.

Choose Good Dyes to Get Good Colors

TINTING the materials to be worked up into rugs is not satisfactory. They must be dyed with fast dyes in order to secure satisfactory colors that will wear well. Select a standard quality, all-purpose dye and follow the directions to the letter or you will be disappointed in the results.

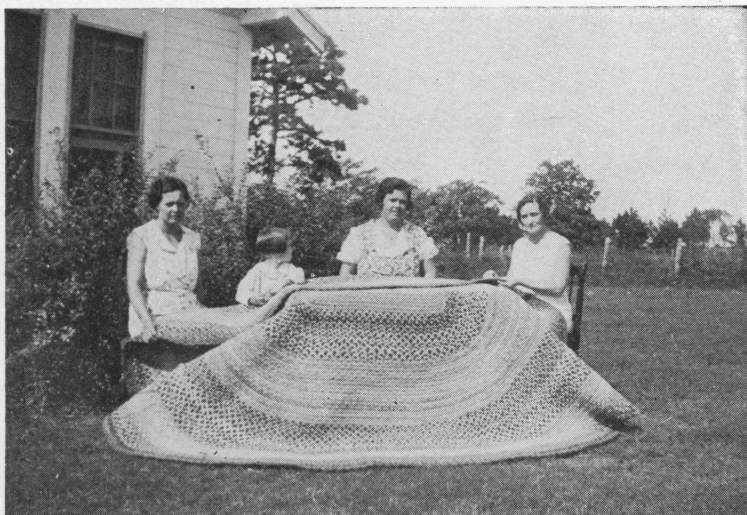
Some of the chief reasons for lack of success in dyeing are: Use of a vessel too small to allow the dye to cover the material entirely with room to stir it freely; uneven distribution of color in the material because of careless and uneven stirring; poorly mixed dye. Or in other words, failure to follow exactly the directions on the package.

After Selecting, Cleansing, and Dyeing, Comes Making

ASSUMING that there is enough material on hand for a braided rug of a desired size; that it has been thoroughly cleansed and all removable spots have been taken out; and that it

has been dyed the colors which were decided upon after careful consideration; then the next step is to cut or tear the material on the straight of the goods into even strips which will work up into a braid from three-fourths of an inch to one inch wide. The weight of the material is the guiding factor in deciding on the exact width of the braid to be used in the rug, so it is well to cut a few practice strips in various widths and try braiding in order to observe the effects obtained and decide on the most pleasing. Braids which are too small are tedious to sew together into the rug; they are more apt to cup on the floor, and they give a confused color effect in the finished product. On the other hand if the braids are too large the appearance will be coarse and unattractive, and the finished rug will be heavy and hard to clean.

After deciding on the width and cutting the strips, fold the raw edges to the center on the wrong side. Then fold the strips down the center, making a strand of four thicknesses. This will prevent any showing of raw edges or ravellings. The folds may be pressed in, or the inexperienced rug maker may find it helpful to baste them. These strands should then be wrapped around heavy card board to keep them smooth and the fold in place. For convenience, each color should be wrapped on a separate card and too many strands should not be wrapped together.



This rug was made by three demonstrators of the Libbert Home Demonstration Club in Nacogdoches county. It is in the Home Economics Building of the University of Texas.



This rug conforms to the space and use assigned to it with pleasing proportions in relation to the furniture with which it is grouped.

Begin braiding with strands of different lengths so that no two joinings will come out at the same place. For ease in handling, strands of about a yard and a half are good. Take three strands, sew the ends together, and fasten firmly to some heavy object so that they may be pulled and held taut while braiding. Turn each strand flat and braid toward yourself to within about four inches of the end of the shortest strand, making sure that the braid is tight, firm and smooth as you work. To join a new strand on to the short one open the fold, cut on the true bias just where it will be covered in the braid by another strand and make a smooth flat seam which will not cause the braid to bulge.

Three strands are easiest to braid and sew into a rug, but any number of strands, from three to eleven, are sometimes used.

Narrow strands of soft material work up better in the braids of more than three than do wider strands of heavier material. A rectangular center may be made of the wide braids by sewing them together in straight lines and several rows of the braid put around it. It is quite difficult to make an attractive, serviceable rug with wide braids. It should be attempted only by those who have taste and ability in the matter of color combinations and who have mastered the problems of workmanship.

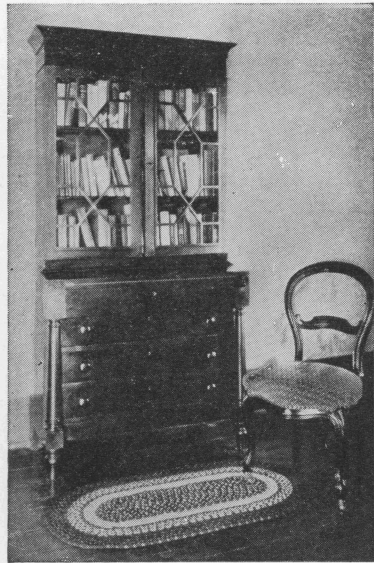
After the braids are pressed the work of sewing them together into a rug should be done on a table so that the weight of the rug will not pull it out of shape and so that it may be held flat at all times. A cupped rug is never satisfactory, and perfect flatness in the finished rug is a mark of good workmanship. By braiding and sewing alternately, the working out of the pattern may be observed and directed.

Heavy mercerized cotton thread, linen carpet thread, or carpet warp, are suitable for sewing. The color should be as nearly as possible that of the material. If the thread is waxed it is strengthened and is less apt to tangle and knot. A blind or slip stitch is used, weaving the thread back and forth with a short darning needle through the flat edges of the opposite braids, care being taken to catch every strand. This type of sewing makes the rug reversible. The stitches should be drawn tight enough to secure firmness, but care should be taken not to draw them so tightly as to cause the rug to cup. When finished, the braids should show no open space between them.

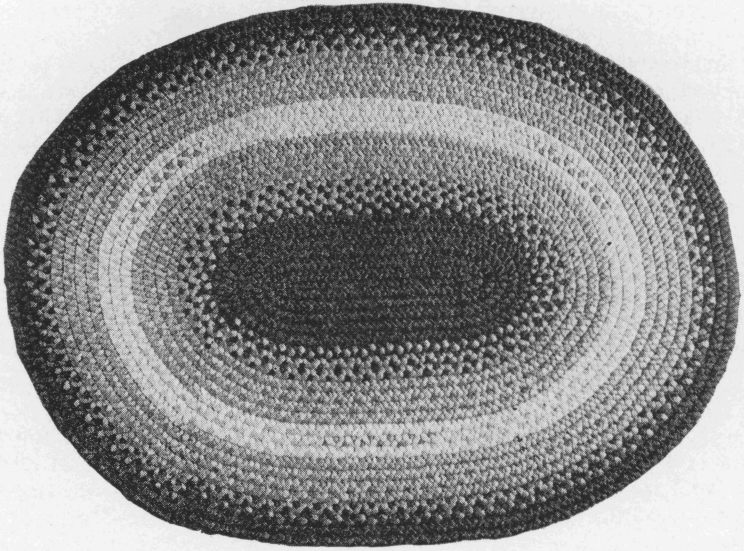
For the beginning of a round rug a simple coil of the braid is made. An oval rug is begun by doubling a braid back on itself and sewing it together in a straight piece which should be as long as the difference between the length and the width of the desired rug. For instance if a rug is to be 36 inches long and 24 inches wide, the first 24 inches of the braid should be doubled and sewed together into a strip 12 inches long—the difference between 36 and 24.

Proceed then to sew the braid round and round, pulling the inner strand of the braid a little at the turn of the oval in order to prevent cupping. Changing the strand to one of different color should always be done on the oval curve.

Some rugs are made by cutting the braid at the completion of each row and fastening the ends with an invisible seam. This brings out the pattern, helps to keep the rug smooth and flat and is a good method where there is a definite change of color which cannot be woven in gradually, one strand at a time.



A braided wool rug of rich blue, red and black color combinations used in relation to the old furnishings in this room is lovely. The rug is beautifully made, reversible, and will last for many years.



A beautifully made braided rug combining autumn colors, made from men's discarded woolen clothing.

When the braids are joined in this way, the seams should be distributed around the rug so that there will be no rough places. Sometimes a smoother, more attractive finish is obtained when the last two or three rows of a rug are fastened in this way.

The design in a braided rug is developed by the arrangement of different colors in the braid. By combining two strands of a darker color with one of a lighter a characteristic pattern results when the braids are sewed together, thus the individual charm of a rug is due largely to the way the design grows out of the structure. Good proportion in spacing and color combination is essential.

Some braided rug designs follow the general scheme of keeping the center in a medium dark color, surrounding it with bands of graduating color going from darker to lighter; this may be followed by a note of contrast introduced by rows of solid color; then back to darker tones on the edge. There should be the same number of rows on each side of the center strip but for the rest of the rug groups of odd numbers of rows seem to work up into the most interesting designs. Variations in design may be had by the use of irregular centers in starting the rug.

Small Mats Are Useful Too

SMALL braided mats offer an excellent opportunity for adding a decorative touch of color or pattern in a room and at the same time they are useful in protecting polished wood surfaces when placed under such articles as a bowl of flowers or a lamp. They may also be used in chair seats.

Silk material may be utilized to a good advantage in this way, whereas, it is scarcely durable enough for floor coverings. Knitted silk material such as hosiery works up with a smooth, even texture and a beautiful sheen particularly suitable for table mats, while heavier silks work up well for chair seat covers.

By cutting the knitted material lengthwise and holding the strips taut, the raw edges curl together naturally and can be held in while braiding. In general the method of making the braided mats is the same as that used in making the braided rugs.

Hooked mats made of silk materials are useful in several ways. As table and chair mats and as tops for foot stools, crickets, or chair cushions they can be used to carry out the color scheme of a room or to add emphasizing notes of color when these are needed.



A small braided mat on the table adds a decorative touch of color to this room and it protects the polished wood surface.

Hooked Rugs Express Individuality

NO two hooked rugs are ever exactly alike even when the same design is used. That being the case, the making of a hooked rug offers a real opportunity for the expression of the individual rug maker's sense of beauty, color and proportion. It should be the source of great satisfaction to many persons who have heretofore failed to find an outlet for their artistic ability.

The amateur should select simple designs and learn all the steps before undertaking the more difficult patterns. Geometric saucer or plate designs can be beautiful if the workmanship is good and if the colors used are soft and rich, giving those faded, blended effects so much admired in the old rugs of this type that have come down to us from our ancestors. Leaf and flower designs of a simple character, scroll designs which may be simple or elaborate, all make for pleasing patterns when lovely color blending is achieved.

Patterns with realistic birds, animals, baskets of flowers, urn, sail boats, and landscape scenes should be avoided. Such realistic designs are apt to become ridiculous when poorly executed.



The rug before the dresser was made by this 4-H club girl.

Many designs are better without a border. A border sometimes has a tendency to make the rug appear to have a frame around it. Furthermore, borders often make rugs look smaller. It is possible for a beautiful rug to result from the use of one color throughout, free of design. The success of this type is dependent absolutely on the beauty of the color chosen and excellent workmanship. Again several shades of the same dull, rich color may be arranged in



The frame into which a pattern is fastened before the process of hooking is begun is mounted on a rigid support so that the work may be done with ease and comfort. Rollers at the top and bottom of the frame allow the rug to be rolled as the hooking progresses.

blocks, diamonds, circles, shells, scallops, or rectangles with or without the use of some darker color to outline each figure. Black is too often used for this and should be avoided as much as possible when outlining designs.

The foundation for hooked rugs should be heavy, closely woven burlap—tow or crocker-sacks, or round bale cotton bagging. Osnaburg or closely woven unbleached cotton goods may be used as foundation for the making of hooked mats. By the use of large sheets of heavy pencil carbon paper, designs may be traced on the foundation. Use the blunt end of a bone or steel crochet hook for this instead of a pencil which is apt to cut into the paper and to destroy the outline of the pattern. Be careful to keep the straight edge of the pattern in line with the weave of the foundation material. At least three or four inches should be left as a margin beyond the rug pattern when traced on the foundation. This will enable the worker to fasten the rug or mat securely into the frame without breaking that part which is needed to form the finished hem.



Household "left overs and cast offs" provide material for braided rugs which have increased in popularity with the practical adaptation of the colonial house and its furnishings to present day use.

The foundation should be tightly fastened into the frame by sewing or tacking, and it should be kept taut while working on the rug. Speed and accuracy are largely dependent upon this.

The material should be torn, if possible, into strips one-fourth inch wide or less, depending upon its weight. Such wiry materials as mohair, serge, and wool voiles, should be cut on the true bias. This will avoid long bits of thread over the surface, and the material is less likely to work out of the foundation. Knitted materials for rugs should be cut on the up and down. Wool hose should be cut around and around, but as a rule silk hose and underwear should be cut lengthwise.

If possible a variety of materials of the same fiber should be used in a rug to give an interesting texture. A hooked rug made of only one type of material has a monotonous quality and somewhat misses the handmade effect.

The old fashioned colonial rug hook is considered by many the best type of needle for making artistic and beautiful rugs. This is the original type of hook used in making rugs and can be purchased for a small sum from most companies which handle rug materials. There are also a number of automatic hooks on the market.

With the colonial type of hook in the right hand, a strip of the rug material held in the left hand on the underside of the foundation, thrust the hook down through the foundation material, catch the strip and draw one-fourth inch loop of it through the foundation. Skip one mesh of the foundation material and put the hook down through the next mesh and draw up another one-fourth inch loop of the strip. This will wedge the first loop so that it will not slip out. After that continue to pull loops of the strip through every second or third mesh of the foundation following the pattern with the color. The thickness of the loops depends on the weight of the rug material in the strips.

Work from the outside edge to the center of the rug. Work all outlines of design first and then fill in the center or solid effects. This will help to prevent puckering.

It is well to allow some loops every two or three inches to be larger than $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch for clipping. This adds interest to the pattern and texture and when sheared down to $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch will help in the final matting of the wool or felt. When a loose end is left, always begin the new strip by pulling it through the same hole, to wedge it in. Pull a slightly longer loop, and both the loose end and the loop can be clipped later, even if it is an un-



As a general rule oval rugs harmonize with most furnishings.

clipped rug that is being made. When finished, the back of the rug should be completely covered with the material. This is proof of its being hooked closely enough for beauty, strength and durability.

Cotton and woolen rugs are often sheared over the entire surface, but in this case the cotton ones are apt to ravel. Do not clip any part of a rug until it is completed, because in case you decide to change a color pulling out does not waste material and is more easily done in the unclipped state.

When completed the rug is removed from the frame and a hem is turned down around the edges and finished at least one and one-half inches wide. Mitre diagonally all corners, and whip corners and edges with even stitches of strong cotton thread. Do not "size" the rug. This indicates an inferior article on the market. A slight steaming and pressing of the rug is necessary after hemming. Place the rug right side down on a very soft surface, cover with a damp cloth and press with a moderately hot iron until the cloth is dry and steam ceases to appear.



Simple frames of this type may be used in making hooked mats.

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