



THE THREAD

Unraveling the Mysteries of Fibers, Fabrics and Floorcoverings

WINDOW TREATMENTS... Treating Them Carefully Assures Longevity

The Triple Threat

Window treatments can be one of the most unique *and expensive* design elements in any room, but too often, they receive little care. Homeowners forget about maintaining their draperies, curtains, shades, valances and other soft window coverings. However, they should be reminded of the triple threat: moisture, pets and sunlight. These three sources can create a host of problems which can be difficult, if not impossible, to correct.

Moisture

Condensation and water leaks from opened or damaged windows can ruin draperies. Depending on the fiber content, shrinking and ringing can be severe and sometimes permanent. It's important to check the seals and edges of windows at least every few months.

While we often feel that curtains and draperies are "out of the way," it is not uncommon to get food and drink stains on the edges and fringes since guests tend to congregate near windows at parties. Any room with a view can be subject to food spills and stains.

Pets

Cats and dogs love to rub against window fabrics or settle in among the folds, leaving their body oils on the fabric. These oils then tend to attract and hold dry soils.



Pet hair is another problem; it sticks to the fabrics and leaves an unsightly darkening caused by body oils. Some dogs and cats also like to "mark their territory" and pet urine left unattended can cause permanent discoloration. Pet stains can also be difficult to remove because they require water-based cleaners. Many of the fabrics used for window

treatments don't respond well to water-based cleaning, which may cause shrinkage or other damage.

While no one can watch the family pet every minute, adding fabric protection to expensive window treatments can help eliminate some of these problems. A skilled technician can remove many of the stains while window treatments are in place, eliminating the costly and time-consuming process of having to take down draperies or shades for cleaning. The ability to spot clean draperies means less wear and tear on the fabrics.

While a fabric protector cannot prevent moisture rings, it can make fabrics less susceptible to them. Also, because a fabric protector keeps soils on the surface, airborne soils will not cling as readily; vacuuming is more effective.

Sunlight

Prolonged exposure to sunlight can create serious damage to soft surface window treatments. Many fibers can become degraded, and over time, can actually disintegrate from exposure to the UV rays of the sun.

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UV rays can also cause window fabrics to fade. This becomes most noticeable when draperies have strong pleating. Because the sun hits some areas and not others, irregular fading will cause a “striping effect.” Neither fiber damage nor fading can be corrected, so prevention is important.

There are a few ways to prevent the effects of UV rays. Adding a lining to draperies, curtains, valances, shades and other treatments can help, but even linings can be affected.

One of the best ways to prevent UV damage is to install a special UV inhibiting film on the windows or to select windows made with UV inhibiting glass as part of the home’s construction.

Another method of preventing fabric fading starts during the selection process. Choosing fabrics made from inherently fade resistant fibers is a very good way to reduce or eliminate fading and should be carefully

considered when an installation is expected to receive above-average sun exposure. Acrylic fabrics (such as Sunbrella®) and some nylons and polyesters are solution dyed and are thus extremely colorfast.

A WORD OF CAUTION:

Don’t be fooled by fabric protection products that claim to have UV inhibitors as part of their formula. It has been proven over and over again that there is no truly effective after-market application product that prevents UV damage.

Day-To-Day Care

Vertical fabrics tend to be ignored for long periods – until the build-up of dust and other contaminants becomes so great that it is eventually noticed!

Window treatments really do benefit from regular vacuuming. Preventive vacuuming two to three times a year can save time and money by eliminating the need for off-site dry-

cleaning which can be costly and is not very ecologically friendly. Areas where pets rub should be vacuumed more frequently.

Should your window treatments become heavily soiled, a professional cleaner can advise you on the best way to have them cleaned.

Water-based spills should be blotted with a white paper or terry towel. When possible, drying the area with a fan after blotting can also help prevent ringing and shrinking.

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