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Making Rugs
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MAKING RUGS

By GERTRUDE REIS*

There are two reasons why it is a pleasure to make rugs. The first is the making of something useful from cast off and worn out materials. The second is the creation of something beautiful to make the home more attractive. A homemade rug is economical and it is beautiful.

Making a rug is a good method of using such old materials as cotton and woolen blankets, sheets and pillow cases, burlap sacks, feed sacks, woolen coats and suits, worn and faded curtains and draperies, house dresses and aprons, overalls and work suits, underwear and hosiery.

In this list, the woolen fabrics are the best for rug making for they wear well. They have a springy quality that is excellent in a rug and they shed the dirt better than the other materials.

HOW SMALL RUGS MAY BE USED

Small rugs whether braided, hooked, or crocheted are particularly well suited for use in a colonial house, in a cottage or small house, or in a country home. Small rugs may be used in the simplest type of home as well as in one that is more richly furnished.

They may be used as the only floor covering or they may be used along with larger rugs and carpets. When a small rug is used with a larger one, it is usually placed to give accent or decoration to some part of the room, before the fireplace, in front of a davenport, or some other large piece of furniture.

Many people use rugs of this type only in halls and bedrooms or on the porch but they may be used in the living and dining rooms if they are in keeping with the general scheme of furnishing.

Use only a few in one room and place them so that they are with the structural lines of the room. Too many small rugs used together give a disorderly and spotty appearance to the floor.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT COLORS

Choose colors for small rugs that repeat some of the colors in the curtains, large rug, or slip cover. This will make the new rug seem to belong to the other furnishings. The colors on the floor make a

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Figure 1.

background for the furniture and other furnishings of the room. Good background colors are quiet and inconspicuous.

Any color may be used for a rug if the color is dark enough in value and dull enough in intensity. The color on the floor should be darker than the colors of furniture, walls, and draperies in order to make a base or foundation for them. This color will vary in different rooms. In a bedroom with very light walls and curtains, light spread, and painted furniture, a light rug may still be the darkest color in the room. In a living room with heavy draperies, and dark oak or walnut furniture, the rug must be quite dark to make a suitable foundation for the dark colors of the furnishings.

A restful background for a room follows the scale of values found in nature, the sky being lightest, all growing things being darker, and the earth being darkest. By following this same plan in a room, the ceiling is lightest, walls and woodwork a little darker, and the floor darkest.

The intensity of the rug color may vary from medium to very dull intensities according to the other room colors. A rug may be interesting in color, yet never attract the first attention as one enters a room. By using soft, dull colors in rugs there is opportunity for employing a variety of the brighter color combinations in curtains, slip covers, and decorative objects.

Pleasing combinations of colors in one rug are a result of keying the colors to the same intensity and to the same value. Avoid the use of colors which are either much darker or lighter than the average for they will make a spotty disturbing design. Avoid also the use of much brighter or duller colors than the average for too great a difference in intensity will make a spotty design. The most harmonious colors for rugs are closely related in their value and intensity.

In following the suggestions for keying colors to gain color harmony, remember that a very small amount of color that is out of key may give accent and variety without destroying a closely keyed harmony.

In every color combination, one color should be more important than the rest. One color should be used in a larger amount than the others to give color emphasis. A combination that has an equal distribution of all the colors lacks character and distinction. By increasing the amount of some one of them, the combination becomes pleasing. Use some cream, gray, tan, white, or black with colors. Use the neutral which is in key with the other colors. Cream or white are in key with light color. Tan or gray are in key with medium colors and black is in key with dark colors. These neutrals give a pleasant relief to colors.

The principal colors must carry into all parts of the design and be distributed over the whole rug in order to avoid a spotty effect. Colors in the center need to be repeated in the border.

If the colors of old fabrics for a rug do not fit into the color scheme of the room where it will be used, use some household dyes to bring about color interest and color harmony in the old pieces. It is not necessary to have great skill in dyeing materials for rugs because the inequalities of color which are often obtained do not harm the color effect in braided, crocheted, or hooked rugs. The streaks and spots of light and dark are interesting and beautiful as they are worked into a finished rug.

MAKING A RUG IS MAKING A DESIGN

Make a rug to fit the space it is to occupy, as an oval or oblong rug for the rectangle. It is possible to fit any size or shape floor space.

Conventional designs are better than real-looking birds, cats, or flowers. Simple connected designs are best. Make a design that will

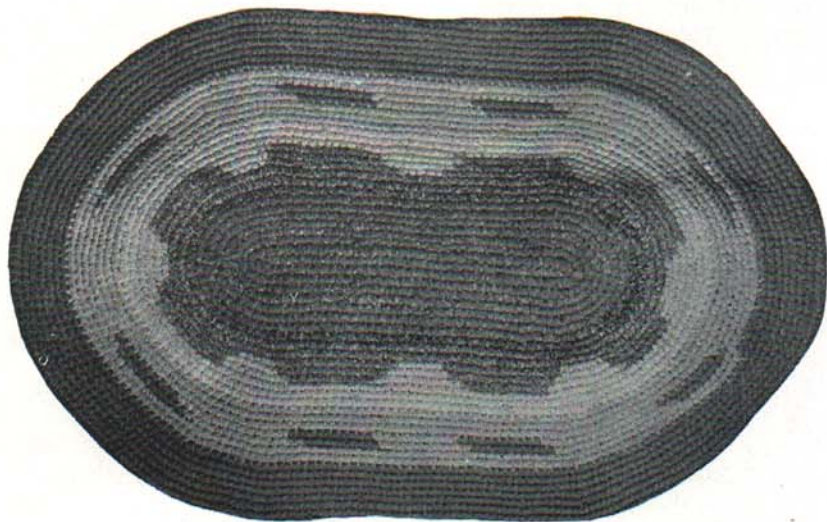


Figure 2.

cover or fill the entire rug space. Designs that do not fill the background space will seem spotty.

The question of design will be considered again in connection with each type of rug.

BRAIDED RUGS

ADVANTAGES OF THIS TYPE

There are several advantages in making the braided rug. One may make use of a greater variety of old materials in this type of rug than in any of the others. The materials must be woven and not knitted. Heavy woolen coats and blankets, overalls and duck, gingham and percales, or cotton blankets and burlap sacks may be used.

There is only one precaution to take, use materials of the same weight in one rug. Do not mix a heavy fabric such as burlap with percale or gingham.

Braided rugs are durable, they shed the dirt well, and they are easy to clean.

No previous training in design or sewing is necessary for the making of a beautiful braided rug.

DESIGN IN BRAIDED RUGS

Simple shapes are best. Oval or oblong braided rugs are more pleasing than odd shapes or elaborately formed designs.

A pleasing oval is about two measurements by three measurements although it may be longer and narrower if the space where it is to be used is long and narrow.

Braided rugs are made interesting by variations in the spacing of colors. Unequal numbers and unequal spaces are best. Two rows of blue, two of gray, and two mixed would be monotonous and uninteresting. But three blue, one gray, and five mixed would make a better division of space.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

Some of the colors used in the center should appear again near the outer edge in order to hold all the parts of the rug together. If mixed braids are being used, they need to be combined with some plain braids to give rest space and color emphasis.

CUTTING STRIPS:

MAKING THE BRAIDED RUG

Cut all materials on the straight of the goods.

According to the weight of the material, and the number of times it is necessary to fold the material to make a firm narrow strand it may be cut from one inch to three inches in width.

Small strips may be cut as samples and folded like bias tape and tested for their width. A folded strand should be no wider than will stay flat and unwrinkled when the next strand is drawn close to it in the braid.

JOINING STRIPS:

Strips of material may be joined either on the straight or on the bias according to the method that works out best for different materials. Some lap the ends of burlap strips if they are on the selvedge and then weave and darn them together until they are as one. The principal requirement in joining strips is to have firm, flat, inconspicuous joinings that show as little as possible in the finished braid.

FOLDING AND PRESSING:

Most materials are folded like bias tape with the two raw edges brought together in the center, then folded once more and pressed.

There are two exceptions to this method. Lightweight materials such as gingham, muslin sheets, or cotton blankets may be folded and re-folded several times until they are thick and firm enough to make a heavy strand. The very heavy materials in blankets and woolen coats may be folded only once, leaving the two raw edges showing, if the materials are such that they will not ravel. When these heavy materials are wiry and do not easily stay folded the two raw edges may be stitched together on the sewing machine.



Figure 5.

Materials which have lost their firmness are more easily pressed and will stay folded better if they are starched just enough to make them like new cloth.

BRAIDING:

Three to twelve or even more strands may be braided together into one braid. Five is a good number to use on materials of average weight. Most rugs are made by using braids with the same number of strands throughout. It is possible for the skilled person to make a rug combining braids that have a different number of strands, this however requires a knowledge of good proportion and design.

All braiding must be very tight and firm so that no holes can be opened up in the braid by pulling on the opposite sides of it. If the braid is fastened to an ironing board or table it can be braided tighter than if the braid hangs limp.

Every folded strand must be kept flat and unwrinkled. Remove all twists, fold in the raw edges, and turn each strand at a right angle on the edge of the braid.

SEWING:

The oval rug is made by starting with a center loop one-third the desired length of the finished rug.

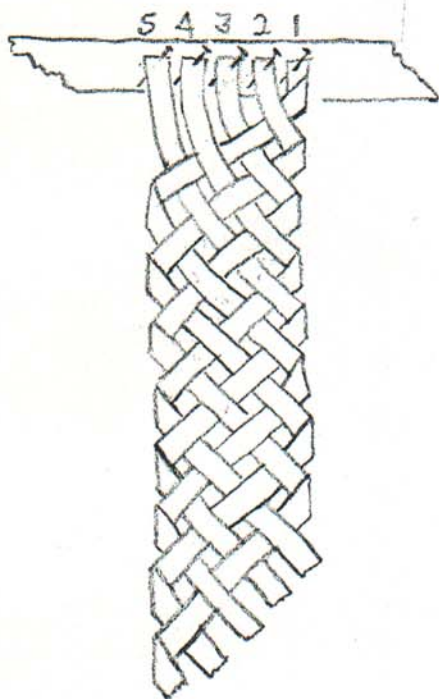
Use a blind or slip stitch in sewing the braids together. Do not use the over and over or whipping stitch. The slip stitch coming within the strands makes the rug reversible, because both sides will look alike. It also makes a rug that will wear longer since no wear can come directly on the threads that hold it together. Very heavy linen or waxed cotton threads are durable for sewing the braids together.

As the braids are being sewed together, allow some fullness at the ends of the rug so that it will lie flat on the floor. It is a good plan to test the rug on a table top as the sewing progresses.

A rug should be firmly sewed and have no open spaces when held to the light. A braided rug lasts only as long as the sewing lasts.

STARTING NEW COLORS:

When every braid is a finished oval by being braided back into itself, there are no clumsy jobs or broken places where contrasting colors come together. This method takes the most time but the results are worth the extra effort required, but, if there is very little contrast in the colors coming next to each other, the braids may be made continuous throughout the entire rug.



Loosely woven section of five strand braid showing flat right angle turn for edge of braid.

PRESSING THE FINISHED RUG:

The finished rug may be dampened slightly and placed on the floor under a weight until it is dry. This insures a flat rug which will cling closely to the floor. It is not a good plan to use a hot iron on a dampened rug for this spoils the appearance of the braid by pressing the strands too flat.

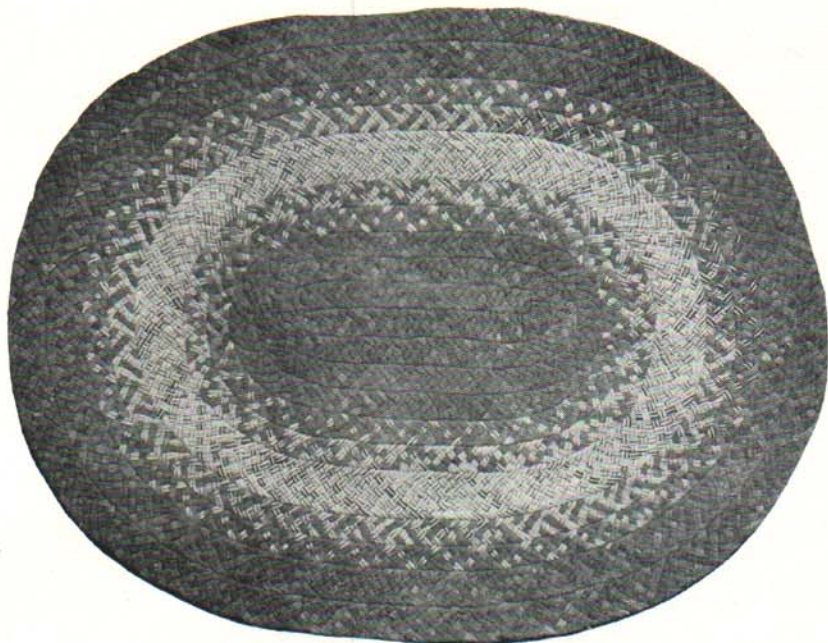


Figure 6.

CROCHETED RUGS

SUITABLE MATERIALS

Cotton dresses and shirts, cotton blankets, feed sacks, underwear, muslin, and knitted rayon and silk garments are most usable, although heavier materials such as woolens may be used.

DESIGN IN CROCHETED RUGS

The problem of design is the same as for the braided rug. Simple shapes are best. Oval and oblong ones are in good taste.

The spacing of colors should be unequal in order to make pleasing proportions.

Some mixed rows of color continued with rows of plain color add design interest.

MAKING THE CROCHETED RUG

CUTTING STRIPS:

The strips are cut from one-half inch to one inch in width according to the weight and stretching quality of the material. Test out the material by crocheting small samples to determine the best width for the strips before cutting an entire garment. A fine texture is obtained by cutting the strips narrow.

THE CROCHET HOOK:

The hook may be of wood, bone, or aluminum. It should be no larger around than a pencil and may be smaller. There are many inexpensive

hooks that may be purchased or very satisfactory ones can be made at home. The handle of a toothbrush may be cut down with a sharp knife or the tine of a pitchfork may be filed to make a hook.

CROCHETING THE RUG:

Use a single stitch and catch through both loops of the previous row to make a smooth surface. When the hook goes through only one loop of the edge a ridge is left and the rug will catch the dirt and have a rough walking surface.

The crocheting should be close and firm to make a substantial rug. A strip of non-stretching material such as a torn strip of percale carried along as a filler gives body to the rug and prevents any possibility of the stitches being loose and stretchy.

Extra stitches added at the ends will keep the rug flat. The average worker finds that three new stitches added at each end of the oval every time around will make a flat rug. The new stitches should be added at different places each time in order to give a pleasing oval shape.

It is not necessary to turn in the raw edges of the material although the rug will appear smoother when finished if some of these edges can be tucked in as the crocheting is being done.

FINISHING THE OUTSIDE EDGE:

A strip of material like one of the colors in the rug may be run through a bodkin or caught in a safety pin and used to overcast the edge of the rug to give a neat and finished appearance.



Figure 7.

HOOKEED RUGS

Hooked rugs are made by bringing strips of material from beneath a close woven material, such as burlap, through to the right side to form loops on the surface. The loops are formed by means of a small hand hook. A pattern may be worked out by using different colors of material. The length of the loops formed is variable.

A punched rug is made by a gauge or needle that punches material down from the right side of a closely woven material to form loops on the opposite side from the pattern. The length of the loop is regulated by the gauge or needle used. It is more difficult to get a close, compact filling of space by the punched method. This method will make larger holes in the burlap foundation than the small hand hook.

SUITABLE MATERIALS

The worn materials of old clothing and such articles as blankets may be used in making a hooked rug. They should be washed, dyed, and tested for strength. The best wear will be obtained from materials which are of the same fiber. But it is possible to mix cotton and wool or to mix silk and rayon when there is not enough of one kind of fiber to make a rug.

Woolen materials make the finest hooked rugs. A greater amount of time is spent in making a hooked rug than in making any of the other types and it is desirable to make a rug which will wear a long time.

HOOKS

A satisfactory size hook is a No. 1 crochet hook. If this is inserted into a wooden handle such as a file handle, it will be easy to use. There are commercial hooks that may be purchased which are already equipped with a wooden handle.



Figure 8.

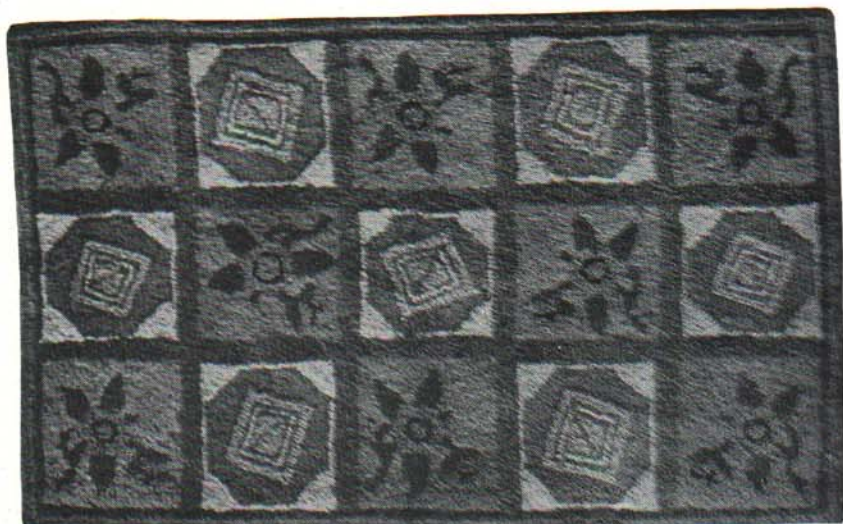


Figure 9.

PATTERN

Conventional designs are suitable for hooked rugs because they have the greatest simplicity and are like the early hooked rugs.

Straight line designs are easier to hook than elaborate ones with curved designs.

It is easy to make a design by first seeing something to get an idea, then drawing the motif on paper, and cutting it out. Use the paper pattern in tracing the design on the burlap.

A small block in a linoleum pattern or one of the figures in a rug often gives an idea for a small design that can be repeated side by side to make a border around a plain center or this same figure can be repeated at intervals over the whole rug to make an all-over pattern.

A rug pattern should follow the lines of structure of the rug and fit the space that it occupies. If the rug is rectangular the design should take the shape of a rectangle. If the rug is oval or round, the pattern should be composed of curved lines that fit into this oval or round space. The parts of a pattern should join or nearly join to give a closely filled space and to avoid the spotty effect given by a few separate figures sprinkled far apart on a plain background.

Borders on the pattern enclose the design and make it seem finished. If the rug is oblong the borders at the ends may be wider than at the sides.

Center the pattern on the material by folding the burlap lengthwise and pressing to show a crease, then folding it crosswise and pressing to show a crease.

Mark the pattern on the burlap with a soft pencil, a crayon, or a pencil dipped in liquid bluing.

CUTTING MATERIALS

The usual method is to cut old material into strips lengthwise of the fabric, but, if there is a bias edge, cut the strips along this edge for they will work up smoother on the bias.

Stockings are usually cut across or round and round although some of them seem to work up better when they are cut lengthwise. These strips will roll up wrong side out. The seam on silk stockings should be trimmed off because it makes a bunch.

Rayon underwear may be cut lengthwise, keeping it right side out.

According to the thickness and firmness of a fabric the strips are cut from one-fourth to one inch in width. Narrow strips make a fine texture in the finished rug.



Figure 10.

FRAMES

Some of the best work is done without the use of a frame to hold the rug stretched taut. Without a frame, it is possible to watch both sides and get a very close texture.

If a frame is desired one may be made by using four strips of wood two inches wide and one inch thick. These four strips may be fastened together at the corners by small metal clamps.

The rug is fastened to the frame by sewing the burlap over the frame with strong cord.

HOOKING THE RUG

Finish the edges of the burlap with a one-inch hem before hooking the rug. This will make an edge that will wear as long as the rest of the rug.



Figure 11.

Try to work the center of the pattern first, but one may work over the whole pattern in order to distribute the colors.

Work from right to left making one-fourth inch to three-eighths inch loops for the uncut loops and one-half inch loops or longer if the rug is to be sheared.

Long loops one-half inch or more make a heavier rug, but they will hold dust, take more material, and look more like rag work than short



Figure 12.

loops. Short loops of one-fourth inch give a texture that is smooth and fine.

Make the loops very close together to make a firm even texture, leaving only one or two strands of burlap between stitches.

The wrong side of the rug should be smooth. Watch this side to see that all the space is being filled and that the weave is compact. The ends of strips should be brought through on the surface of the rug and cut off to make them the same length as the loops. No ragged ends will then appear on the back.

If a rug is to be sheared, work with the blades flat to the rug. An unshaired rug is perhaps more typical of early hooked rugs and will wear longer than a sheared one.

When the rug is completed, overcast the edge with a strip of fabric used at the edge or a strong thread.

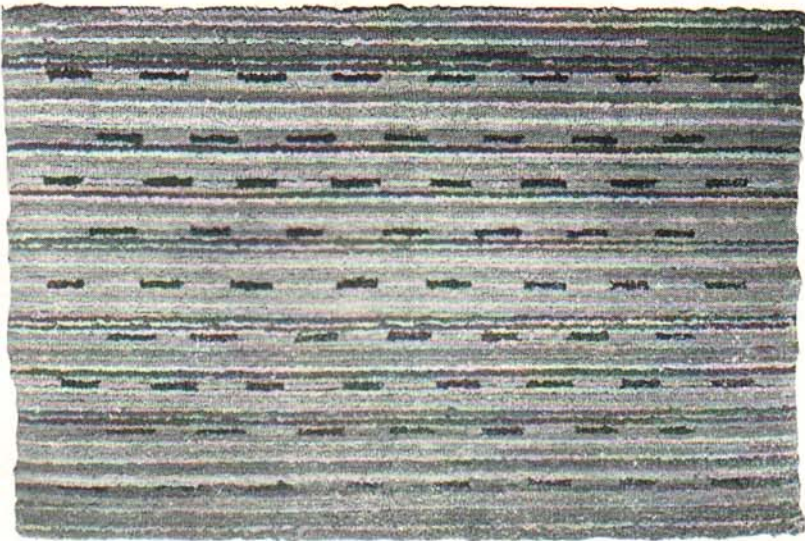


Figure 13.

LINING THE RUG

A hooked rug may be lined with heavy denim, ticking or canvas to increase the wearing qualities. This, however, is not necessary, for a well made hooked rug will wear for an indefinite length of time.

HOME DYEING

The dull and drab colors in old curtains, slip covers, table covers and rags for homemade rugs may be made beautiful and harmonious by dyeing them at home.

There are many reliable household dyes on the market in soap, flake and powder form. These dyes come in a wide variety of pleasing colors.

They are classified into dyes for wool and silk which require an acid, vinegar, to set their color and dyes for cotton and linen which require salt to set their color. However, there are all-fabric dyes which dye all fibers in the same bath. Salt is used to set this type of dye.

These household dyes are easy to use if the directions that come with them are accurately followed. In general, the directions are the same for each type of dye. The principle in each is that evenness and fastness of color are the result of the dye penetrating the material at boiling temperature and then being fixed or made fast by a mordant in the form of salt or acid.

EQUIPMENT

A large pan that will hold sufficient water to cover a large amount of saturated cloth.

A small basin in which to dissolve the dye.

Wooden sticks for stirring the material in the dye bath. Metal spoons are apt to leave spots on the material being dyed.

Pieces of cheesecloth are needed for straining the dissolved dye into the large pan of water.

Salt or vinegar for fixing the color, according to the kind of dye being used.

A pan for rinsing the excess dye from the material.

PREPARING THE MATERIAL

The material must be clean and free from spots and stains. Boiling the fabric for 10 minutes in soap and water or in water to which some ammonia, two tablespoons for each gallon of water, has been added, will free it from all dirt. This process will also even up the streaks and faded spots by removing all the color possible and make it easier to dye new colors over the old ones. Commercial color removers may be used at this time if all the old color is to be removed.

OLD COLORS INFLUENCE THE DYEING OF NEW COLORS

It is never possible to dye a light color over a dark color without bleaching the material with a commercial color remover.

A satisfactory plan is to dye an old material a dark shade of the original color, as navy blue over powder blue or brown over tan.

A dull, pale color may be intensified and brightened by dyeing it a similar but more vivid hue than the original, as bright orange over tan or peacock blue over powder blue.

Colors may be changed to different ones altogether by using the color wheel as a guide in mixing colors that come next to each other on the wheel. Yellow may be changed to orange by mixing it with red or it may be changed to green by mixing it with blue.

In dyeing over a figured material the figures will show after dyeing unless a very dark color is used.

Dye all pieces that are to be one color in the same dye bath for it is almost impossible to get exactly the same color twice.

The directions which come with each kind of dye contain commercial charts which are helpful in making color combinations and in knowing which colors may be dyed over others.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

Before dyeing an entire piece of material, test out colors on a small sample. Any color will appear darker while the sample is wet than when it is dry. A wet piece of material held to the light appears as it will when dry. Colors will be more accurate if the test sample is ironed dry after each experimental dipping.

Weigh the material to be dyed and then follow the directions in determining the amount of dye that is necessary to secure the desired color.

Dissolve the dye in a small amount of water then strain it through a double thickness of cheesecloth into the large pan of water.

Thoroughly wet the fabric before putting it into the dye bath. After it is in the dye, boil it gently for 10 minutes, stirring all the while with wooden sticks. The material must be kept moving about in the dye so that there are no knots or twists and so that no part will be above the surface or rest on the bottom. This step is perhaps more important than any other in securing even color.

When the 10 minutes are up, remove the material from the dye long enough to stir in the vinegar or salt. Then replace the material and allow the dye to continue to boil for 20 minutes more.

At the end of this time, remove the material and rinse in water until all the excess dye has been washed away and the last rinse is clear. Lukewarm water is best for the first rinse.

The material should be squeezed dry, not wrung. Dry it quickly out of doors but not in the sun. Finish the process by pressing the fabric with a warm iron while it is still slightly damp.