

DESIGN FOR THE WELL-LIVED LIFE

# HOUSE & GARDEN

OCTOBER 2005

*all about*

## *Floors*

Trends in carpet, wood, tile, stone, leather



MAGIC CARPETS: THE STARKS AT HOME



# Keeping Up

DOMESTIC BLISS

## TEN WAYS TO CODDLE A FLOOR BY GLENN RECCHIA

I'M INSTANTLY AT HOME with a wood floor, especially old parquets that have been lovingly cared for over the years. But man cannot live on bare wood alone—fine wool and silk rugs are not only seductive but also enhance wood's allure. Here are some suggestions for keeping rugs, as well as the floors they grace, in tip-top shape.

**1 WHAT LIES BENEATH** Antique carpets should not have heavy furniture constantly resting on them, but even normal use will wear out high-traffic spots. To extend a rug's life, use a quality carpet pad, choosing the appropriate material for the type of floor under it. In addition, rotate rugs once or twice a year to distribute the wear evenly.

**2 DEBUGGING** Oriental rugs containing wool are prone to damage from moths. These bugs aren't the kind that flit about in lamplight. They prefer darkness, where they eat away at the underside knots and fringe undisturbed. Reversing the carpet from time to time to vacuum the underside helps prevent insects from getting into a rug. But if you suspect they have already infested the rug, vacuum it, dispose of the bag in the outside trash, and immediately call a professional to clean and repair the rug before it is beyond help.

**3 BUGS, PART 2** Carpet beetles, which resemble ladybugs, enter the house on cut garden flowers. After cutting blooms, ready a bucket of water outside the kitchen door. Gently plunge the flowers into this bath, making sure to cleanse flower, leaf, and stem of any offenders.

**4 DOORMATS** Most people would never use abrasive cleaners on their floors, but few consider how much damage ordinary dirt can do. A good quality doormat stops most such grit at the threshold. I'm partial to mats from Topdeq (866-876-3300, topdeq.com), which are sturdy enough to be machine washed and dried. Or why not invite your guests to slip on a pair of Haflinger boiled wool slippers from a basket beside the front door?

*The Electrolux Aptitude, with Swedish flat-weave rug from F. J. Hakimian.*

**5 SUCK IT UP** Frequent vacuuming is the best care you can give a wood floor. (Make sure the vacuum's wheels are immaculately cleaned of any grit.) Follow with a dry microfiber-cloth mop, like Mystic Maid, or a Swiffer, to pick up what the vacuum leaves behind. To eliminate built-up filmy grease, clean today's polyurethaned wood with Fantastik or Murphy Oil Soap (which, despite its name, contains no oil).

**6 WAXING** On the other hand, classic Versailles parquet and other wood finished with shellac require a solvent-based wax that is buffed to a brilliant gloss. A French company named Liberon makes a clear unscented version. Don't use any water on these floors to remove surface dirt. Rewaxing usually suffices.

**7 OUT, DAMNED SCUFF!** Shoes cause those unsightly black scuff marks, and shoes take them away. Gently rub scuff marks with the sole of a clean sneaker. This delightfully simple trick works for wood as well as stone and other tile floors.

**8 CREAK CONTROL** Wood floors, even new ones, can develop maddening creaks if they have too few nails. Before calling a carpenter, try shaking talc between the floorboards, then gently tapping the wood with a rubber mallet. The powder will work into the rub and silence the creak.

**9 GROUT** My favorite floor stone is Carrara marble. The grout is invariably white and therefore soils quickly. It's best to have both grout and tile professionally polished and sealed; short of this, use an ink eraser—the kind used for typewriters—to clean the grout of any surface soil.

**10 HIDE STAINS** Leather floors are luxurious, and most stains and blemishes dissolve to a soft patina with twice-yearly applications of paste wax and weekly buffings. Oil and grease, however, are not welcome. Blot the residue with a cotton rag and dust with a coat of fuller's earth, a clay product available at hardware stores. Allow the powder to absorb the grease overnight. Brush it away the next day. Repeat if necessary. □



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