



# Fabulous Fabrics

## ADVANCEMENTS IN TEXTILES RESULT IN UPHOLSTERY OPTIONS THAT WOW

A printed floral medallion is the centerpiece of this outdoor textile by Perennials Fabrics. The design was inspired by 15th-century Florentine works, and the updated version captures a recent trend to use pretty yet durable outdoor fabrics inside.

**I**n the home, fabrics can make or break the look of a room. While adding color, texture and pattern to a space, they also should complement the homeowner's lifestyle.

Recently, new options have become available, in large part due to manufacturing advancements that make it possible for furnishings to be upholstered in fabrics that are both fabulous and functional.

We explore three of the latest trends—indoor textiles that are elegant yet durable; outdoor fabrics that are chic enough to be used inside; and fabrics featuring historic prints—with input from Davinder Chawla, senior interior designer with Robb & Stucky; Stephen Elrod, executive vice president, creative director for Lee Jofa; and Tamara Johnson, owner of Beau Monde Window Fashions & More.

## ELEGANT YET DURABLE

"Gone are the days when people had to choose between furniture that really looked great and furniture that wore well," comments Johnson. "Today, fashion and function act in tandem to deliver durable and reasonably priced, well-performing upholstery fabrics." She points out some of the newest trends:

### More choices

■ **Bolder designs:** Options with splashy geometric and floral patterns are becoming increasingly popular.

■ **Visual impact:** Such hues as yellow, orange, salmon pink and robin's egg blue can invigorate a setting and work well with neutrals. Fabric trim is another way to add pizzazz. Look for metallic "jewels," glass beads, shells, crystals and more.

■ **Super materials:** Manufacturers are utilizing more durable materials to produce textiles that can withstand an increasing amount of wear and tear without compromising style. Crypton and Teflon are two such materials.

### Helpful hints

■ **Blends:** Some materials do not hold up as well as others. For example, 100-percent linen or silk fabrics tend to be less user-friendly than blends. If you like the look of linen or silk, find an option in which the material is combined with a more durable material, such as polyester or rayon.

■ **Backing:** Fabrics with a knit backing offer more durability than those without.

■ **Protection:** Look for fabrics that have been treated to provide additional protection from stains and to make them more durable.



**Above:** This damask pattern by Paul Brayton Designs is produced using Crypton, which makes it more durable. **Left:** Floral designs and metallic threads make these offerings from Sina Pearson Textiles elegant, while their fibers make them resistant to spills.



## PUT TO THE TEST

Tamara Johnson of Beau Monde Window Fashions & More explains that one way homeowners can determine the durability of a fabric is to ask for its Wyzenbeek abrasion rating. Here are the basics, according to the Association for Contract Textiles:

■ The Wyzenbeek abrasion rating test was developed to predict how much wear and tear a textile can withstand. It involves pulling a fabric taut and

rubbing it with a cotton fabric. The fabric is then examined for wear and yarn breakage.

■ Look for fabrics that have a rating of 15,000 double rubs or more. The higher the number, the more durable the fabric.

■ Keep in mind that several factors determine a fabric's actual performance on an upholstered piece, including the furniture's design, its usage and how it is maintained.

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

According to Chawla, today's assortment of outdoor fabrics is virtually limitless in terms of design styles, textures and color palettes. Her observations follow:

### Land of plenty

■ **More color:** Many homeowners are finding it easier to establish a cohesive design between interior and exterior spaces, thanks to a broadening color palette ranging from brights to pastels and neutrals. Advancements in manufacturing allow many of these fabrics to maintain their color, even when exposed to the desert's intense sun.

■ **More texture:** Outdoor fabrics are becoming increasingly textural, with choices that include chenilles, cottonlike textiles, and sheers, as well as options that resemble leather.

### Helpful hints

■ **Heat factor:** Fabrics marked suitable for outdoor use may not perform well in the Southwest, with its hot summers. For example, avoid fabrics with olefin, as the material tends to melt when placed on metal furniture frames that are exposed to the heat, causing fabric to shrink. One hundred-percent acrylic generally holds up the best.

■ **Inside out:** "Don't be afraid to bring your indoor palette outside." If you're unsure of what colors to carry to patio spaces and beyond, look for inspiration in the hues found in your flooring, which often extends from interiors to exteriors.

■ **Outside in:** Outdoor fabrics typically are easy-care, washable and harder than indoor textiles. Consider using them to upholster indoor pieces in spots prone to wear and tear, such as eating areas and children's spaces.



**Above:** These indoor chaise lounges are upholstered in a Modern-looking outdoor fabric from the Joe Ruggiero Sunbrella Collection, which was inspired by renowned French interior designer Jean-Michel Frank.

**Right:** Bright colors and fun patterns enliven The Happy Hour Collection of outdoor textiles by Phifer Inc.



## TAKE GOOD CARE

*In a desert climate, keeping outdoor fabrics looking their best can be a challenge. Davinder Chawla of Robb & Stucky offers the following suggestions:*

■ Dust can settle into outdoor textiles and eventually discolor them. To prevent fading and keep fabrics looking their best, hose them off at least once a month. In summer, when

dust storms are prevalent, it may be necessary to do so once a week.

■ To freshen fabric colors on cushions, remove their covers and wash in color-safe bleach. This should be done once a year.

■ Most outdoor fabrics can be cleaned by simply spraying them down with a garden hose. If needed, apply a mild soap and rinse with water.

## TIMELESS TREASURES

Elrod notes that fabrics featuring historic designs are experiencing a resurgence. Often displaying bold patterns, these textiles can be based on antique and vintage fabrics, wallpapers of years gone by, and even illustrations found in old books.

### What's different

■ **New techniques:** Some textiles inspired by older pieces are being reinterpreted using techniques not originally available. For example, embroidered patterns may be screen-printed or woven into fabrics. Or, companies may choose to use the design found on the back side of an antique print, thus highlighting the side of a fabric not meant to be seen in the initial design.

■ **New finishes:** Many homeowners are drawn to the "worn, lived-in look" of historic fabrics. As a result, companies may wash, tumble or stone-wash a textile to achieve the desired effect.

### Helpful hints

■ **Inspiration:** Fabric manufacturers sometimes derive inspiration from ethnic sources, including Suzani and Ikat weavings. Their patterns create visual impact and work well in eclectic settings.

■ **Recent influences:** Although termed "historic," these textiles can be influenced

## EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

*Fabrics inspired by historic patterns offer a fine way to bring visual interest to a room. Stephen Elrod of Lee Jofa provides tips for successfully incorporating this type of textile:*

■ Be sure the fabric you select complements a room's existing decor. Keep in mind such elements as style, pattern size and color palette.

■ Historic patterns often work well on accent pieces. Try using them for throw pillows, to upholster a chair, or as draperies to "help the room take on more personality."

■ Keep in mind that the patterns found in many of these fabrics are gender-neutral, allowing them to be incorporated in a wide array of rooms and decors.



by newer designs. For example, Lee Jofa has a line of fabrics based on designer David Hicks' work from the mid-20th century.

■ **Updated style:** Metallic elements are being incorporated, creating a "newer, fresher vibe." They may be embroidered, printed or woven into a historic-looking pattern. □

*See Sources.*

**Top:** Pillows sporting a Pindler & Pindler design inspired by a Suzani weaving from the 1880s lend an ethnic element to this bed. **Above:** Native American pottery and textiles from the Museum of New Mexico influenced this collection of historic-based textiles from Kravet.