

Explore the GRASSES

By MARGO LOCUST

Above, J. Mish, from left to right, Celeves Sea Grass 2 over 1 weave, Birma Sea Grass 3 over 3 weave, Luzon Sea Grass Chevron design, M.G. Deluxe Mountain Grass, and O'Saka Seagrass 4 over 4 weave.

Live up your livingroom naturally with a natural grass area rug from Design Materials Inc., as shown below.

What a time for “grass” rugs. It’s the perfect confluence of consumer tastes, summertime’s liberating feel and the trend toward natural products in the home.

We think we know something about grass rugs. Those are the ones for the big front porch or the beach house. But the minute we get past that, starting with the fact they can be had in widths over 12 feet, it seems so, well, confusing. It doesn’t have to be, really. (With such widths, you can use grass rugs as a wall-to-wall base for other rugs.)

When designers speak of grass, they are talking about natural fibers, surely, but those of the plant variety — not any of the wools. Here are the basics:

SISAL

Sisal fibers come from the long, spiny leaves of the Mexican agave plant grown by farmers and harvested yearly for the life of the plant, about seven years. Sisal can be used in normal climate-controlled interiors (those not prone to moisture), largely residential but some limited commercial uses. Tight construction and fiber resiliency reduce matting.

COIR

These abundant fibers are from the inner husk of coconuts which a healthy tree will bear for many years. Floor coverings made from coir are intended for indoor, residential to medium commercial settings, depending on the style. Coir is considered very resistant to abrasion. The flatter and tighter the weave, the better it performs.

SEAGRASS

Seagrass is essentially perennial grass growing in coastal marshes in monsoon regions of the Pacific Basin. Thick, rigid, non-porous reeds aid its durability and soil and stain repellency. It likes climate-controlled residential environments and can mildew in damp or





ROOTS

of Flooring.

Above, from left to right, coir #2 in slate, sisal Livos in macadamia, mountain grass Aspen in natural, sea grass Cyprus in natural and cellulose fiber Woodwinds in color Mocha, all from Design Materials Inc.

humid areas. Part of the Seagrass charm is irregularities like knots and color variations.

MOUNTAIN GRASS

Another reed grass, often sourced from high-altitude Pacific Rim regions like mountainous Northern China, mountain grass is emerging as a popular woven floor covering in the West. It likes normal climate-controlled environments, never moist or humid. High fiber resiliency and tight construction mean little matting in traffic areas.

CELLULOSE

Cellulose fiber is a natural fiber coming from conifers (evergreens) like pine trees, mostly grown on plantations in northern Europe and Canada. Those northern exposures give cellulose strength, stamina and resistance to differing climates. It's actually been around more than 150 years, but new technology makes cellulose fiber even more hard-wearing. 🌱

CARE & CLEANING OF NATURAL FIBERS

Contrary to much popular opinion, natural grass fiber floor covering is cleanable — to an extent — based largely on the fact that it is a natural product.

Your first line of defense is regular cleaning with a high-suction vacuum cleaner. Most grass floor coverings are non-static, so they don't hold onto dirt and dust.

For spills, generally, blot immediately with a clean towel. Some products and some manufacturers recommend drying carefully with hair dryer or dry-type compound to absorb moisture. Some will darken when wetted, more so if left untreated. Light colors may be more difficult to maintain. Some grasses are treated with a surface protectant. Ask your retailer for advice before that accident occurs!

Generally, use walk-off mats at entrances and protective cups or "feet" on furniture and appliances.