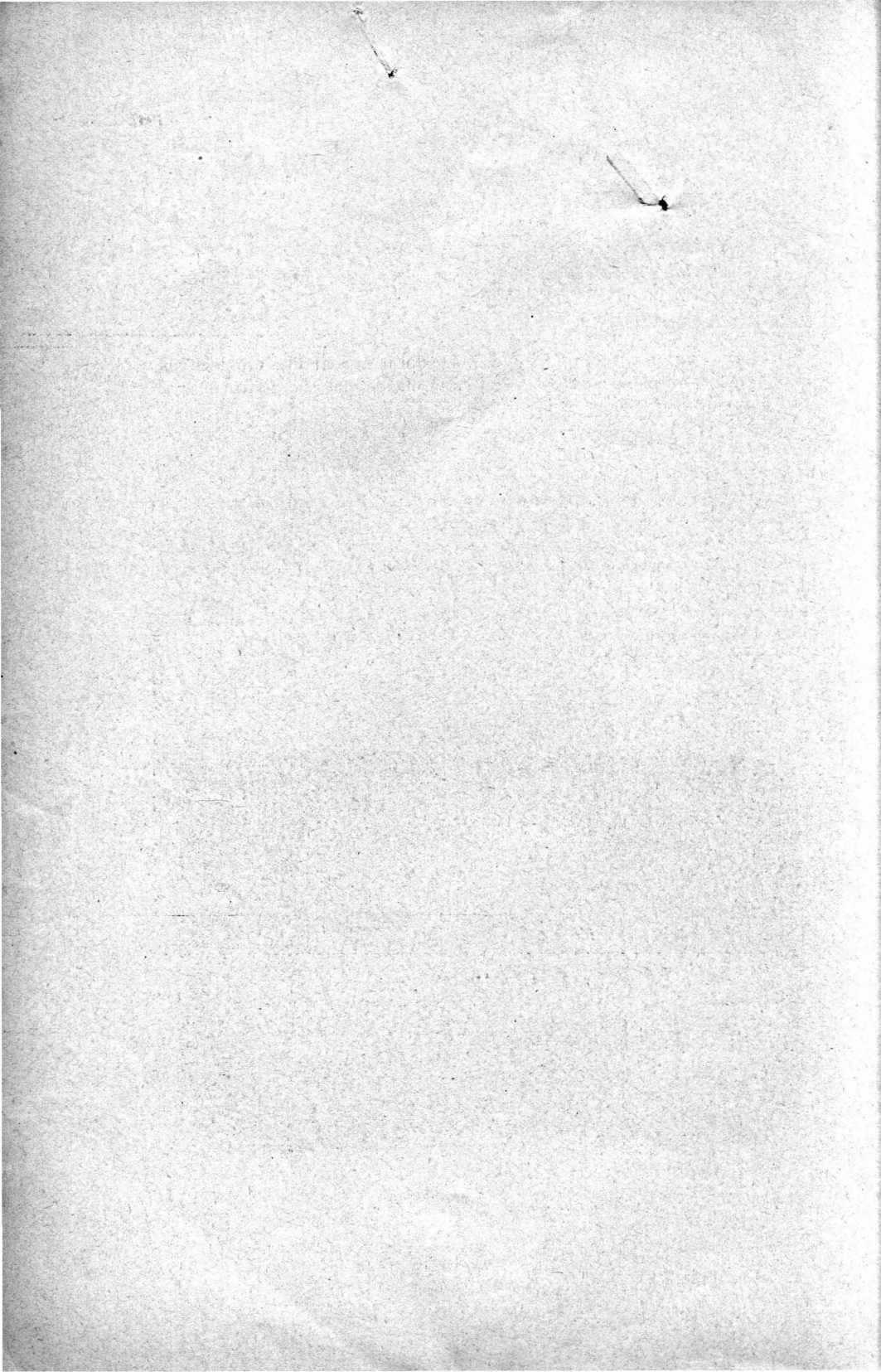


From Rags To Rugs



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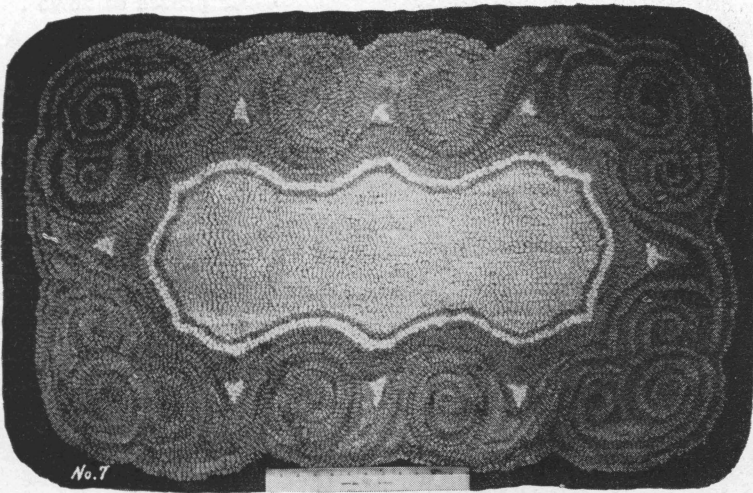


From Rags To Rugs

by

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and Home Industries Specialists

"How to adorn the simple home and make it appear like a palace" is one of the arts of home making and in it the choice and use of floor coverings play an important part. When the homemaker opens the door of her house to a guest an impression of comfort and beauty and charm is at once made if the rugs fit into the environment as they should. If they have been looked upon as a part of the foundation of the room, like the floor they will be a little darker in tone than the walls. And if the colors of the rugs have been carefully related to the color of the room and to that of the floor itself they will give a feeling of unity and restfulness. If they have been chosen so that they fulfill their purpose well they will be of sufficient size not to appear as spots on the floor and they will conform to the space and use assigned to them with pleasing proportions in relation to the furniture with which they are grouped.



Plan Size and Shape and Color To Suit Use

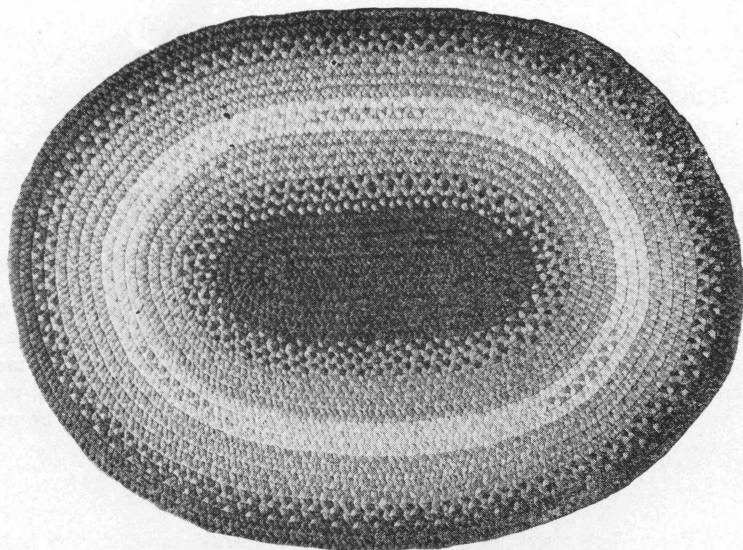
In order to achieve this pleasing effect the home maker must determine in advance the size and shape and probable use of her rugs. It should then be remembered that when placed in front of the fire place the rug used there should be approximately as long as the hearth. The space beside a bed requires a somewhat larger rug than one designed to be placed in front of the usual sized dresser, while a smaller rug still is suitable for the doorway. As a general rule an oval rug fits in better with most furnishings than a round one and rectangular rugs are more usable than square ones.

With practical adaption of the colonial house and its furnishings to present day use has come much interest and enthusiasm for early American arts and crafts and with this naturally has developed interest in the rugs of that period. This revival of the popularity of the hand made rugs of grandmother's day is convenient since the need for home beautification is not always supported by a satisfactory bank account,

and the manufacture of these rugs requires the simplest of equipment and household "left overs and cast offs" often provide ample material. Then too the sale of home made rugs of good workmanship frequently can be made to supply money needed for other phases of home improvement.



Either braided or hooked rugs may properly be used in farm homes, cottages and larger houses of the colonial type. They are suitable for any room of the house provided they harmonize with the other furnishings of the room. Particularly in a bed room where a smoothly finished floor with several small rugs is considered most desirable these hand made rugs offer serviceable and distinctive floor coverings.



Many Materials Make Good Rugs

Wool, cotton, burlap, silk and linen in various states of wear have all been used for making braided and hooked rugs, but the first three are the best, the second two are not especially recommended. Only material of the same fibre should be used in a rug—that is, all wool, all cotton, or all burlap. No matter what the material is, care should be taken to eliminate those portions which are badly worn, otherwise the part of the rug they appear in will soon wear out while the rest is still quite good. Also, no matter what kind, it must be cleaned when worked up into a rug and it must be put through the cleansing process before it is torn into strips.

Braided and hooked rugs both may be made of old woollen blankets and garments such as suits, coats and dresses. The more flimsy materials such as challis and wool crepes should be used for hooked rug only. Corduroy makes a beautiful braided rug but it is not suitable for hooking as it is too hard and its cotton back cannot always be hidden. Knitted garments of wool are especially pleasing in hooked rugs, but only the heavy, very closely knit materials can be used for braided rugs.

Only closely woven cotton materials of good body and weight should be used in the construction of braided rugs if wear and best results are to be secured. Avoid the flimsy open mesh knitted cotton materials for either braided or hooked rugs. This is a poor quality of rug material, the results will not be satisfactory, giving poor return for the labor of making in the form of a pliable rug underfoot, soon wearing out.

Old faded overalls, blue and grey shirts, and good quality children's ribbed cotton hose and underwear can be used with pleasing effect in hooked rugs. Cotton cord may be saved from packages, dyed and so used effectively also, but the work is tedious.

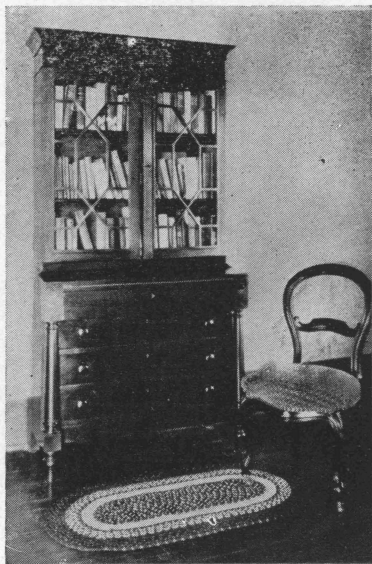
Gunny sacks which are a combination of jute and hemp and are often plentiful on the farm because of purchasing grain, feed and fertilizer in them are good rug material. There is much soft sheen in these fibres, but the drawback is that they do not hold the dye well. If a hooked rug is wanted the sacks must be first dyed and then raveled out and the thread used. This is a tedious process but some very pleasing rugs have resulted.

Old silk materials of good strength whether knitted or woven may be used for rugs but it is not recommended; the life of such material used in this way is short and the labor could be better spent working on more substantial materials. If silk is used in a braided rug it must be all woven or all knitted, but in a hooked rug a combination of both may be used to advantage giving interesting quality and texture.

On Color Combination Depends Beauty

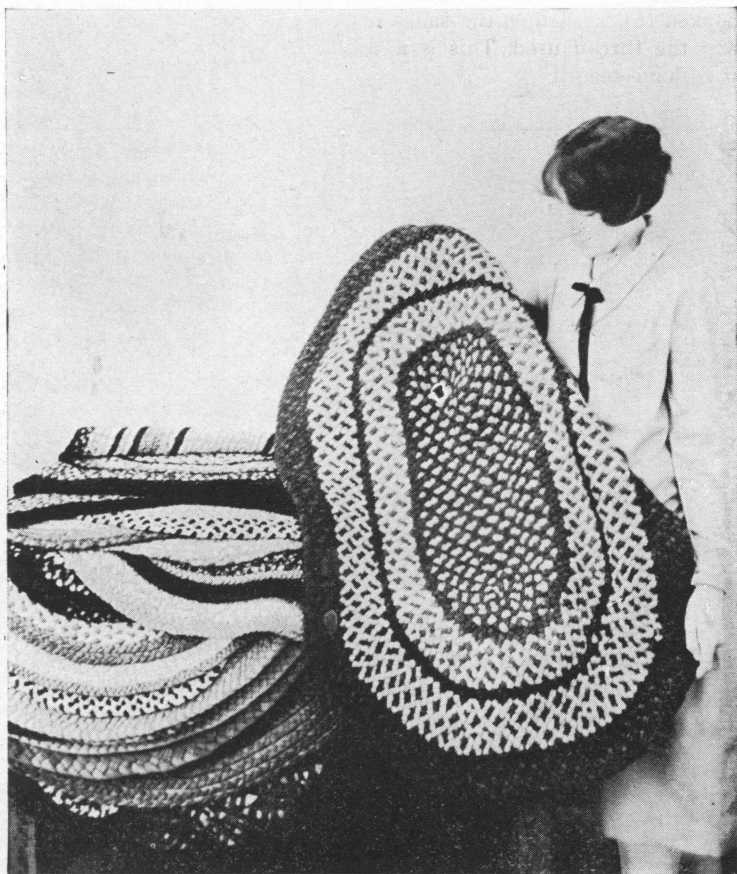
A few colors may wisely be used in a single rug, especially by beginners. After some experience it is possible with skill and a keen color sense to combine many lovely colors producing delightful effects, but

before that can be done the rug maker must play with colors, putting this one and that one together; adding another one or two or three; taking away those which do not blend; studying this combination and that one all before deciding definitely and venturing into the construction of a rug. In choosing colors it is to be remembered that among the most admired features of the early hand made rugs are the lovely soft, rich, color effects which have endured through the years. Strong intense colors should be used with the greatest care. Small areas may be made more interesting by the use of an intense color but this use calls for a neutral effect in the background to balance the brilliant color. Braided rugs permit a more free use of intense color since they can be braid-



ed in with two strands of neutral colored material. Because of this, contrast is more often used in braided rugs to develop design than is the case with hooked rugs.

Makers of rugs can secure help in developing a feeling for combinations of colors by studying the colored pictures so freely used in the magazines of the day.



Choose Good Dyes To Get Good Colors

Tinting the materials to be worked up into rugs will not do. They must be dyed with fast dyes in order to secure satisfactory colors that will wear well. Select a standard quality all-purpose dye and follow the



directions to the letter or prepared to be disappointed in the results. Some of the chief reasons for lack of success in dyeing are: using a vessel too small to allow the dye to cover entirely the material with room to stir it freely; uneven distribution of color in the material because of careless and uneven stirring; poorly mixed dye. Or in other words failure to follow exactly the directions of the package.

After Selecting, Cleansing, and Dyeing, Comes Making

Assuming that there is enough material on hand for a braided rug of a size wanted; that it has been thoroughly cleansed and all spots that are removable have been taken out; and that it has then been dyed the colors which were decided upon after careful consideration; then the next step is to cut or tear the material on the straight of the goods into even strips which will work up into a braid from three-fourths to one inch wide. The weight of the material is the guiding factor in deciding on the exact width of the braid to be used in the rug, so it is well to cut a few practice strips in various widths and try braiding in order to observe the effects obtained and decide on the most pleasing. Braids which are too small are tedious to sew together into the rug, more apt to cup on the floor and give a confused color effect in the finished product. On the other hand if the braids are too large the appearance will be coarse and unattractive and the finished rug will be heavy and hard to clean.

After deciding on the width and cutting the strips, fold the raw edges to the center on the wrong side then fold the strips down the center making a strand of four thicknesses. This will prevent any showing of raw edges or ravelings. The folds may be pressed in, or the inexperienced may find it helpful to baste them. These strands should then be wrapped around heavy card board to keep them smooth and the fold in place. For convenience each color should be wrapped on a separate card and too many strands should not be wrapped together.

Begin braiding with strands of different lengths so that no two joinings will come at the same place. For ease in handling, strands of about a yard and a half are good. Take three strands, sew the ends to-

gether, fasten firmly to some heavy object so that they may be pulled and held taut while braiding, turn each strand flat and braid toward yourself to within about four inches of the end of the shortest strand, making sure that the braid is tight and firm and smooth as you work. To join a new strand on to the short one open the fold, cut on the true bias just where it will be covered in the braid by another strand and make a smooth flat seam which will not cause the braid to bulge.

Three strands are easiest to braid and sew into a rug, but any number of strands from three to eleven are sometimes used. Narrow strands of soft material work up better in the braids of more than



three than do wider strands of heavier material. Braids made of five or more strands result in firmer rugs if they are sewed together in straight lines than when they are fashioned into oval rugs. Or a rectangular center may be made of the wide braids sewed together in straight lines and several rows of the braid put around it. It is quite difficult to make an attractive, serviceable rug with the wide braids and it should be attempted only by those who have taste and ability in the matter of color combinations and who have mastered the problems of workmanship involved.

The work of sewing the braids, which should be pressed, together into a rug should be done on a table so that the weight of the rug will not pull it out of shape and so that it may be held flat at all times, as a cupped rug is never satisfactory and perfect flatness in the finished rug is a mark of good workmanship. By braiding and sewing alternately the working out of the pattern may be observed and directed.

Heavy mercerized cotton thread, linen carpet thread, or carpet warp, are suitable for sewing. The color should be as nearly as possible that of the material and if the thread is waxed it is strengthened and is less apt to tangle and knot. A blind or slip stitch is used, weaving the thread back and forth with a short darning needle through the flat edges of the opposite braids, care being taken to catch every strand. This type of sewing makes the rug reversible. The stitches should be drawn tight enough

to secure firmness, but care should be taken not to draw them so tightly as to cause the rug to cup. When finished the braids should show no open space between them.

For the beginning of a round rug a simple coil of the braid is made. An oval rug is begun by doubling a braid back on itself and sewing it together in a straight piece which shall be as long as the difference between the length and the width of the desired rug. For instance if a rug is to be 36 inches long and 24 inches wide the first 24 inches of the braid should be doubled and sewed together into a strip 12 inches long — the dif-

ference between 36 and 24. Proceed then to sew the braid round and round, pulling the inner strand of the braid in a little at the turn of the oval in order to prevent cupping. Changing the strand to one of different color should always be done on the oval curve.

Some rugs are made by cutting the braid at the completion of each row and fastening the ends with an invisible seam. This brings out the pattern, helps to keep the rug smooth and flat and is a good method where there is a definite change of color to be introduced which cannot be woven in gradually one strand at a time. When the braids are joined in this way the seams should be distributed around the rug so that there will be no rough places. Sometimes a smoother, more attractive finish is obtained when the last two or three rows of a rug are fastened in this way.



The design in a braided rug is developed by the arrangement of different colors in the braid. By combining two strands of a darker color with one of lighter a characteristic pattern results when the braids are sewed together, thus the individual charm of a rug is due largely to the way the design grows out of the structure, good proportion in spacing and color combination being essential.

Some braided rug designs follow the general scheme of keeping the center in a medium dark color, surrounding it with bands of graduating color going from darker to lighter; this is followed by a note of contrast introduced by rows of solid color; then back to darker tones on the edge. There should be the same number of rows on each side of the center strip, but odd numbers of strips in the graduating colors, the contrasting one and the edge seem to work up into the most interesting designs. Variations in design may be had by the use of irregular centers in starting the rug.

Braided Mats Are Useful Too

Small braided mats offer an excellent opportunity for adding a decorative touch of color or pattern in a room and at the same time they are useful in protecting polished wood surfaces when placed under such articles as a bowl of flowers or a lamp. They may also be sometimes used in chair seats.

Silk material may be utilized to a good advantage in this way, whereas, it is scarcely durable enough for floor coverings. Knitted silk material such as hosiery works up with a smooth, even texture and a beautiful sheen particularly suitable for table mats, while heavier silks work up well for chair seat covers.

By cutting the knitted material lengthwise and holding the strips taut the raw edges curl together naturally and can be held in while braiding. In general the method of making the braided mats is the same as that used in making the braided rugs.



Hooked Rugs Express Individuality

No two hooked rugs are ever exactly alike even when the same design is used. That being the case the making of a hooked rug offers a real opportunity for the expression of the individual rug maker's sense of beauty, color and proportion and should be the source of great satisfaction to many persons who have heretofore failed to find an outlet for their artistic ability. The amateur should select simple designs and learn all the steps of making this kind of a rug before undertaking the more difficult patterns. Geometric saucer or plate designs which were originally, as their name indicates, taken from saucers or plates can be beautiful if the workmanship is good and the colors used are soft and rich and give those faded, blended effects so much admired in the old rugs of this type that have come down to us from our ancestors. Leaf and flower designs of a simple character, scroll designs which may be simple or elaborate, these all make for pleasing patterns when lovely color blending is achieved.

But patterns with birds, animals, baskets of flowers, urns, sail boats, and all the landscape patterns should be avoided. They are poor from the standpoint of artistic design, they are too realistic and are apt to become ridiculous when poorly executed and give poor return in beauty for good workmanship.

All over patterns are good when construction and color are right. These should be finished without a border in order to secure more unusual effects. It is possible for a beautiful rug to result from the use of



one color throughout, free of design, the success of this type is dependent absolutely on the beauty of the color chosen and excellent workmanship. Again several shades of the same faded looking rich color may be arranged in blocks, diamonds, circles, shells, scallops, or rectangles with or without the use of some darker color to outline each figure. Black is too often used for this and should be avoided as much as possible when outlining designs.

The foundation for hooked rugs should be heavy closely woven burlap, tow or crocker-sacks, or round bale cotton bagging. Osnaburg or closely woven unbleached cotton goods may be used as foun-



dation for the making of hooked mats. By the use of large sheets of heavy pencil carbon paper designs may be traced on the foundation. Use the blunt end of a bone or steel crochet hook for this instead of a pencil which is apt to cut into the paper and to destroy the outline of the pattern. Be careful to keep the straight edge of the pattern in line with the weave of the foundation material. At least three or four inches should be left as a margin beyond the rug pattern when traced on the foundation, this will enable the worker to fasten the rug or mat securely into the frame without breaking that part which is needed to form the finished hem.

This frame into which the pattern is fastened before the process of hooking is begun should be heavy enough to be steady and should be mounted on a rigid stand if the work is to be done with ease and comfort. Rollers should be at the top and the bottom of the frame so that as the rug progresses it can be rolled. The foundation should be taut when finally fastened by sewing or tacking into the frame and should be kept taut while working on the rug, speed and accuracy are largely dependent on this.

The material should be torn, if possible, into strips $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch or less wide depending upon the weight of the stuff. Such wiry materials as mohair, serge, and wool voiles, should be cut on the true bias, this will avoid long bits of thread over the surface and the material is less likely to work out of the foundation. Knitted materials for rugs should be cut on the up and down, while wool hose should be cut around and around, but silk hose and underwear should be cut lengthwise.

When materials are cut wider than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch the surface of the rug is coarse and open and the result is a poor quality of rug. If possible a variety of kinds of material of the same fibre should be used in a rug to give an interesting texture; a one material hook rug has a monotonous quality and somewhat misses the handmade effect.

A rug hook may be made by filing to a point a heavy wire nail or a screw driver and fashioning a hook on the point like a crochet hook, but deeply hollowed out back of the hook. It may be bent or straight. It should be set in a handle and should not be more than five inches long. This is the original type of hook used in making rugs, but there are also a number of automatic hooks on the market. With this type of hook in the right hand and a strip of the rug material held in the left hand on the underside of the foundation, thrust the hook down through the foundation



material, catch the strip and draw $\frac{1}{4}$ inch loop of it up through the foundation. Put the hook down through the next but one mesh of the foundation and draw up another $\frac{1}{4}$ inch loop of the strip; this will wedge the first loop so that it will not slip out. After that continue to pull loops of the strip through every second or third mesh of the foundation following the pattern with the color, closeness together of the loops depending on the weight of the rug material in the strips. Work from the outside edge to the center of the rug. Work all outlines of design first and then fill in the center or solid effects.

This will help to prevent puckering. It is well to allow some loops every two or three inches to be larger than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch for clipping; this adds interest to the pattern and texture and when sheared down to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch will help in the final matting of the wool or felt. When a loose end is left always begin the new strip by pulling it through the same hole to wedge it in, pull a slightly longer loop and both the loose end and that loop can be clipped later even if it is an unclipped rug that is being made. When finished the back of the rug should be completely covered with the material. This is proof of its being closely enough hooked for beauty, strength and durability.



Cotton and woolen rugs are often sheared over the entire surface, but in this case the cotton ones are apt to ravel. Do not clip any part of a rug until it is completed because in case you decide to change a color pulling out does not waste material and is more easily done in the unclipped state.

When completed the rug is removed from the frame and a hem is turned down around all the edges and finished about one and a half inches wide. Mitre diagonally all corners and whip corners and edges with even stitches of strong cotton thread. The maker may prefer to line the rug for home use, but this is not necessary for marketing it. Do not "size" the rug. This indicates an inferior article on the market. A slight steaming and pressing of the rug is necessary after hemming. Place the rug right side down on a very soft surface, cover with a moderately damp cloth and press with a moderately hot iron until the cloth is dry and steam ceases to appear.

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