

Area rugs are a popular choice at Criterion Carpets

Whether you're hoping to cover up cold floors before the cold weather hits, or turning your home into the Taj Mahal, complete with hand-woven rugs, carpet shopping is no easy task.

People, above all, are looking for a bargain, said Wilf Batten, owner of Criterion Carpets on Guelph Street in Georgetown.

Area rugs are a popular choice this year, he said, because "lots of people are going back to hardwood (flooring) and they need something to complement their hardwood."

Criterion offers the top name brand carpets, such as Harding and National, but also carries Persian, Chinese and Pakistani rugs.

"It's not wholesale, but it's pretty close," the owner says. "We've got pretty good prices here. That's

why (people) come in."

More people will be buying carpets a month from now, but there is still an increased number who are ready to improve their homes.

"When the weather gets colder, people will be more interested in work. It's too hot right now to work," Mr. Batten said.

The purpose of carpeting is "to cover up floors" but customers are carefully choosing colors and textures. Forest green, peach, pink, dark and light greys, and beige and brown are popular choices. Mr. Batten said.

More and more people are having area rugs custom made. The rugs can be moved easily, to different locations for those who rent their homes.

Versatile scroll saws add to workshop

If you consider yourself a do-it-yourselfer, you've probably run into a project where you needed to make a curved cut in wood, plastic or metal. Or better yet, you've had to cut out house numbers or trace a pattern for a child's toy. Your standard circular saw won't help you here, and neither will that hand saw, unless you've got plenty of extra time.

Ever wondered how the pros accurately make these cuts? They use scroll saws, which are among the most useful bench-top tools. Like a hand scroll saw, power scroll saws have a very thin, narrow blade. This thin blade follows tight curves without binding. So, unlike other types of saws, scroll saws can actually cut circles. It's this ability that makes the use of a scroll saw necessary for many of the woodworking and project plans available.

To illustrate how scroll saws work, one classic scroll saw project is making a wooden jigsaw puzzle. After mounting a picture on a piece of wood, you cut the

jigsaw pattern. Because the scroll saw is so precise, it doesn't damage the material on either side of the cut.

Scroll saws are great for making toys, too. If you're making wood toys, for instance, most patterns are fashioned after animals. Unless you're planning to make a square alligator, chances are you won't have a single straight cut on the entire project. It's no problem with a scroll saw.

But scroll saws are for more than just fun and games. You won't be able to do without a scroll saw if you are refinishing furniture or renovating an old house.

Older furniture can have intricate scrolling patterns and inlays. Professional refinishers charge a handsome fee for replacing these broken parts, using a scroll saw to copy the missing pieces' shapes.

Old houses usually have damaged woodwork that is no longer available commercially. Finding replacement pieces is taxing. A scroll saw and router will help recreate much of this unsalvageable material.

If you're thinking you should add a scroll saw to your workshop, be sure to pick the right one. Dremel, a power tool manufacturer that has over 32 years of scroll saw experience, offers some guidance for buyers.

Pick the size that's best for you. Scroll saws are measured by the throat depth—the distance between the blade and the inside of the U-shaped arm that holds the blade. The larger the throat depth, the

heavier-duty the saw is—or so goes conventional wisdom.

Dremel's 15", model 571 Scroll Saw, for example, can cut 15 inches in from the edge of the work material. It will cut pine up to 1-inch thick. That's fine for small and mid-sized projects.

The 16", model 1671 Scroll Saw, is a heavy-duty cast aluminum tool that handles small-, mid-, and large-sized projects. It can cut up to two inches of pine.

Power and speed are good measures of what you can expect the saw to accomplish. The model 1671 has a direct-drive, 1/10 horsepower motor that produces two blade speeds from 890 and 1790 strokes per minute. You can expect to work it hard without significant problems.

Table size refers to the work area around the blade. The larger the table, the larger the project you can work with easily. Dremel's 16-inch model has a 12" round table.

Finally, consider how it's constructed. Dremel's model 1671 has a cast aluminum base and table, so it provides a stable work surface.

Once you make a purchase, take time to experiment with the tool. After a short time, you'll get the feel for making intricate scroll cuts.

Woodworking and project plans are available from a variety of sources. Dremel offers a "Project Plan" series for use with scroll saws.

Create garden projects this fall

With another season of outdoor living around your garden, porch, deck or patio behind you, think ahead to next spring. What types of projects and furniture would enhance your outdoor living room?

You can shop the sales at the garden and patio centers, but expect to find picked-over inventories of still-costly merchandise. An alternative is to use the fall and winter to create and build your own outdoor garden projects in the garage or basement. In the spring, you can move outside to apply the finishing touches with a good stain and water repellent.

Two key product categories to look for at your local home center are "outdoor millwork" products and wood preservatives/water repellents, both clear and with stains.

Outdoor millwork products are pressure-treated wood products such as turned spindles, lattice panels, finials and fancy fence boards that, while thought of mainly for decks, porches and fences, can easily become time-saving components for smaller projects. In fact, many of the products are designed with notches and grooves to fit together easily, speeding construction and adding a custom look to your designs. Likewise, the wood

preservatives/water repellents are important for large projects, but can be even more critical for preserving and enhancing the look of your showcase projects.

Two leading product brands, Weyerhaeuser LifeWood outdoor millwork and Woodlife clear wood preservative and Woodlife II stain and wood preservative from DAP, recently commissioned some "idea-starting" design ideas for outdoor projects from an unusual source.

What resulted is a series of project ideas that demonstrate the flair with which you can design and build outdoor projects using outdoor millwork products. Also, wood preserving finishes can be important for enhancing the project's visual appeal.

Third Street Studios suggests the following project ideas:

- **Bavarian boot bench.** Store your garden hand tools and boots in garden seating with a face and back using LifeWood Bavarian Sculpture Board outdoor millwork.

- **Finish the project with clear wood preservative/water repellent.**

- **Whimsical lanterns.** Use sections of fancy Queen Anne spindles framed with notched handrail millwork and finials to create eye-catching oversize garden lanterns.

- **Light lanterns with low-cost low voltage outdoor lighting kits,** such as those from Toro, by actually placing the entire plastic fixture inside the wood lantern.

- **Finish with a stain and wood preservative.**

- **Trashcan stowaway.** Use outdoor millwork lattice and C-shaped channel for framing the lattice to face the sides of a clever garbage can container framed with one or more Dec-top posts.

- **Finish it with two complementary soft colors of Woodlife II stain and wood preservative and your unsightly garbage can will become an attractive outdoor cabinet.**

- **Sundial or birdbath base.** Start with inverted finials as the feet, add four Sir Richard spindles to support the first base and then two more spindles to support the sundial or birdbath.

- **Finish with a clear wood preservative/water repellent.**

Here are several other project ideas: Planters with corner finials and solid sides covered in lattice or fancy fence boards of a contrasting color; ball-footed benches or tables using round turned posts as legs; a plant *étagère* with spindles supporting the shelves;



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