

## How To Care For Your Sisal

Sisal are relatively easy to maintain. The hard, natural vegetable fibers do not attract dust, and bacteria cannot penetrate the fibers. Sand and fine dirt do not damage sisal carpets as they do conventional floor coverings; the soil filters through the weave, rather than sits on the surface. Both sisal are tough, natural fibers which are less vulnerable to abrasion.

### Fiber Characteristics

As with other yarns made of vegetable fibers, both sisal have variations in size, shade, and tendency to return to their original color after exposure to sunlight. Slight weaving and shade irregularity are common characteristics. Shade differences between areas exposed/unexposed to sunlight may be apparent (underneath furniture, behind picture hangings, etc.). Fading due to direct exposure to sunlight is uniform, resembling the tones of unfinished wood.

### Maintenance

Regular vacuuming with a strong brush-suction is all that is needed for daily care of sisal carpets. The beater-type cleaner is not as effective due to the weave. The strong suction of the vacuum pulls out the fine dirt which has accumulated between the fibers and on the underlay. Although the need may not be visible, this frequent and regular vacuuming will increase carpet life by preventing soil build-up, and will help eliminate stains caused when spilled liquids dissolve soil accumulations.

If exposed to dryness or low humidity, a frequent, light and even application of water strengthens these natural vegetable fibers and enhances the wearing qualities. Moisture can be applied by spraying, light sprinkling, clean mop, damp brush, or any device that would give a light and even application of clean water. This dampening can also help eliminate minor bubbling and looseness, as both carpets will tighten up slightly as they dry. Sisal carpets dry quickly. Under no conditions should the carpet be saturated, or undesirable dimensional changes could result, as well as possible staining from dyes in the underlay. Care should be taken that the carpets are vacuumed and clean before applying the moisture, since dirt in the matting might stain if dissolved.

### Spot cleaning

Immediate attention to spills is the most important for spot removal from sisal carpets, as it is with most floor covering. The spilled substance should be removed as soon as possible by blotting up with clean, undyed paper towels or cloths, or scraped up with a dull knife or nail file. Two methods are recommended for the following substances:

### Overall Cleaning

Sisal carpets are hygroscopic. That is, they absorb moisture and give off moisture, depending on the relative humidity in their immediate environment. Although humidity is good for natural fiber carpets, saturation of the fibers with water can cause undesirable dimensional change. (See above "Maintenance".) Therefore, steam-cleaning, wet shampooing, or any other method that involves water saturation of the matting is NOT recommended! For overall cleaning, spray-extraction method is recommended, using minimum moisture setting on the machine. Here the cleaning liquid is applied by pressure and removed by vacuuming in the same working cycle. Application should be continuous, keeping the application moving to prevent excess moisture in any spot. Note that complete moisture extraction is not possible. The moisture penetrates the fibers and the coarse structure causes the absorption of air. No water marks are visible with this method due to the even application of moisture. If

the carpet has been glued down, it should be determined that the adhesive is not water soluble before applying moisture.

### **Curled rug corners**

When sisal carpets are used as an area rug, traffic or shuffling of feet across a corner or edge could cause the edge to curl. It is easy to cure this by dampening the curled area, or placing a damp towel over the area and weighting it down evenly overnight. If severely curled it might be necessary to repeat this process.