

Decore Score: Attic, the final frontier in storage space

by Rose Bennett Gilbert

Q: We are desperate for more storage space. With four children, every closet is crammed. We were thinking of co-opting the attic, but now our oldest (15) is begging to move her room up there to "escape" her kid siblings. Is there a way to combine her room and our storage needs? Right now, it's a terrible mishmash!

WORTH CLIMBING THE STEPS FOR - Neatly efficient extra storage space is walled off at the end of this attic and hidden behind double doors. CNS Photo courtesy of 'Organize It' by Merve Kaufman. A: You can manage that mishmash in one stroke of genius by stealing a big idea from the attic we show here, borrowed from the pages of a wise book all about de-cluttering your home ("Organize It!" by Mervyn Kaufman; Filipacchi Publishing).

These homeowners nipped a few feet off one end of their attic to wall-off extra storage space. Wall-mounted shelves, drawers, and hanging space hold out-of-season clothes behind closet doors that close neatly over the "secret" closet. The rest of the attic is left free, in this case, for family activities. In your case, your teen can turn it into a room that will be well-worth climbing the stairs for.

Q: We are planning to dress up our sun porch this winter and need new rugs out there. We started out to buy sisal - my sister has sisal on her enclosed porch. I went shopping but came back really confused by the different kinds of rugs and carpets I found. What's the difference between jute, seagrass, coir, hemp, and sisal? Which is best for an application like ours?

A: All the fibers you've mentioned are naturals, all harvested from different kinds of grasses. On the plus side, they are attractive, abundant, eco-friendly, and relatively inexpensive (compared to other natural fibers like wool and man-mades, like some nylons). On the down side, most of these naturals do require some special concessions from their housemates. Jute, for example, can't take long exposure to either sunlight or moisture. Use it on an enclosed, protected porch, however, and it's a joy to live with.

Sisal is another natural winner. Eco-green (it's grown with no pesticides or chemicals), sisal comes from the agave plant. It can be harvested every seven years, so it's sustainable, as well. About the only shortcomings to sisal are its susceptibility to moisture and its sometimes slippery: avoid using sisal on stairs.

Hemp has been around almost since the beginning. Early-on, humans learned to harvest hemp from the cannabis plant (hence, our word for canvas). Today, hemp is showing up in rugs, too, often woven-in with cotton fibers.

Coir is culled from coconut husks, so it's tough enough to resist abrasion, insects and rot. In fact, coir can

spend months underwater, so it's perfect for the great outdoors.

Seagrass may be the champion of all these preternaturally durable naturals. It's so resistant to stains, it can't even be dyed! Always left in its natural state, therefore, seagrass makes carpets and rugs that are resilient and comfortable underfoot.

Bamboo is also showing up underfoot in rugs and carpets that resemble familiar bamboo blinds, bound and laid on the horizontal. Famously fast-growing, sustainable and durable, bamboo is also being used in fiber-form in sheets, towels, and other household fabrics. Can rugs be far behind?

Â© Copley News Service

Decore Score: Attic, the final frontier in storage space by Rose Bennett Gilbert