SPRING HOME

Sheer satisfaction: Window treatments offer view and easy care

By KRISTEN COUNTS Special to the Record-Eagle

t's a shade. It's a blind. It's a sheer. It's all three, a new hybrid that is just one of the current trends in the window treatment business.

Local retailers are carrying a variety of new products and are experiencing sales trends that reflect the changing décor in northern Michigan homes.

Retailers are also sharing tips on caring for window treatments and shopping on a budget.

The most common trend appears to be the use of sheer fabrics.

"People are going back to soft fabrics, to control the light that is coming in," said Linda Johnson, owner of Draperies on Wheels in Traverse City.

One option is the vertical blindsheer hybrid that provides light control, a Hunter Douglas product called Luminette which is available locally, including Peninsula Window Coverings in Traverse City.

A similar sheer option in a horizontal blind is the Silouhette, also made by Hunter Douglas; but it can currently be found as a knock-off with other window treatment retailers.

Another trend is the ornamentation of the common sheer.

"We're seeing sheer fabrics with stitching, applique and beads. Sheers are becoming more ornate," said Patrice Lynch, owner of Draperies by Patrice in Traverse City.

"Wood and wood composites seem to be one of the trends (in blinds) and there is a comeback in shutters and two-inch miniblinds," said Mike Ciesla, owner of Peninsula Window Coverings in Traverse City. "The woods have knots and grains that are great for a rustic north woods look.'

"Roman shades are what many people want now," said Lynch.

These shades that form pleats while being pulled up ultimately "look like a valance" when all the way up.

"Honeycomb blinds (also called cellular blinds) are extremely popular. They have a soft look with no visible cords; and they have an insulation value," said Ciesla.

Another trend is toward casual, draped swags instead of boardmounted valances

"People are going with a more casual look," said Lynch.

Retailers also mentioned a few items that are brand new on the scene of window treatments. Lynch spoke of the solar shade.

"You can see out, but no one can see in during the day. A person can block out the light that can be damaging to furniture and carpeting, yet they can still enjoy the view.

It is available in a range of weave openness, from three to thirty percent. Another new product is a vertical blind/curtain hybrid called Serenette, by Hunter Douglas.

"It (Serenette) has a drapery appearance, with soft folds when it is closed," said Mike Ciesla, owner of Peninsula Window Coverings in Traverse City.

A new wooden blind on the scene is the plantation blind, which "imitates the look of a plantation shutter," said Johnson. It allows for the light to be controlled in the same manner as the shutter, but without the "cumbersome" frame.

Ciesla mentioned that he is now carrying a new material in vertical blinds.

"Textured vinyl looks like a fabric, but is more durable.'

Another new option is a wood curtain rod that has an aluminum track.

"You can have the convenience of easy-glide with the beauty of a wood pole," said Johnson.

Also hitting the market are a variety of knock-offs.

"Cordless products, including

Properly installing a pet door

The actual installation of a pet door is easy. Cut a hole in a door, mount the simple-to-install kit and teach your pet to use it. But, there are a few important points to know:

Are there other domestic animals in the neighborhood that might attempt to use one's pet door?

Are there wild animals in the area that might attempt to use one's pet door? Remember that wild animals can exist even in areas that are completely built out with housing.

■ Will a pet door offer egress or other dangers for a toddler? A petdoor opening could be large enough for a toddler to scoot through

■ Is the selected installation location accessible and convenient to a burglar? Believe it or not, there are burglars who are expert at using a pet door to gain access to one's home, especially if the opening is located near a door lock.

■ Is the location one that could increase the danger of a house fire? It might not look that way but the door between your kitchen and garage is special. The door between the garage and home is known as "the fire door." In most homes this is the only door of its kind. It is specially made to take longer to burn than a regular interior door. Installing n-no and incr



Lynch. "I'm seeing people really start to use a lot of color on walls and window treatments. They're getting away from neutral. Colors

mini-blinds, shades, and cellular

blinds (or honevcomb blinds) are

like burgundy, celery green, sage and other muted tones are popular, mixed together (in a room)." Ciesla added, "Earth tones are popular; that way you're always safe with whatever you go with because the colors will blend with anything."

People often discover accumulated dust on their window treatments during "spring cleaning." However, Lynch recommends cleaning them every two to three months. She said that most treatments should be dusted with a light feather duster or vacuumed.

"Some sheers are washable," added Lynch. "Otherwise, they should be dry-cleaned.'

"The days when dust accumulates on the blinds and doesn't let go are over," said Johnson, as she praised the benefits of the many products that are coated with anti-static paint or other anti-static substances.

"Make sure that the vacuum is set on a gentle power," recommended Johnson, who also suggests using a cool hair dryer, especially with honeycomb blinds.

There are many options to

What lies beneath carpets

uried treasure" — that's how what an oak floor that has been covered with wall-to-wall carpet is for a lucky homeowner.

Hardwood floors were standard equipment in homes until plywood and cost-conscious construction made its way onto the scene. Although a carpet and pad can offer some level of protection, the nails used to hold the tack strip at the perimeter and staples used to attach the carpet could mar the finish.

Carefully remove the carpet and pad. If the pad is attached with staples, remove them using pliers. Use equal caution to remove the tack strip using a pry bar and a small hammer. Be sure to place a small shim shingle or other protection between the pry bar and floor.

With the carpet and pad out of the way, thoroughly vacuum the floor and then sponge-mop a small section at a time using a cleaning solution such as Spic and Span. Remember, wood and water don't mix, so be sure to go easy with the water. Once clean, use a soft white terrycloth dampened with mineral spirits to test if the finish consists of wax or a hard finish such as polyurethane. If the surface appears dull after wiping a small section with mineral spirits, it is waxed. If the finish appears to be revitalized, the finish likely is polyurethane.

If your test reveals that the floor is waxed, apply a new coat of either



Above, the Hunter Douglas Silhouette line of window shadings demonstrates how they offer light control and protection against harmful UV rays while still letting in the view. Above right, a close up of how the shade filters natural light.

> windows, and the retailers suggested ways to get the most "bang for your buck.'

Ciesla advised, "Look for products with a lifetime guarantee and that have been out for a long time. See that there are parts and service...'

"People should educate themselves in the sense of knowing what they want the product to do," said Johnson. This ensures getting the products that are needed for each room.

"Tell them (retailers) you're on a budget up front," advised Johnson.

This keeps a buyer from wasting time looking at products outside their budget. Just another little tip to keep in mind are that window treatments range in price

improve the look and function of as follows (from low to high)mini-blinds, shades, honevcomb blinds, blind-curtain hybrids.

"If they're on a real tight budget (for a large window or door), said Lynch, "I'll suggest a vertical blind with a valance rather than a curtain, because large amounts of fabric can be expensive.'

To ensure that you get the look you are looking for, here's one last bit of advice.

Johnson suggested, "The best thing a customer can do is look at pictures and cut them out... Keep a portfolio of what you like, so when you are re-doing, you (and the designer) have an idea of where to go.'

Kristen Counts is a local freelance writer.

Tighten sagging doors

fter a door has been opened and closed thousands of times, the screws that attach the hinge leaves to the **L**doorjamb can loosen, causing the door to sag and bind. If this has happened to one of your doors, first make sure these screws are long enough to extend through the jamb into the trimmer stud behind it. The screw should penetrate it by 1-1/2 inches

You might need to replace screws that have worked loose. One old trick is to fill the screw hole in the jamb with toothpicks or wood match sticks and glue, giving the new screw something to bite into. But on heavy exterior doors you need something more substantial than that, like a length of hardwood dowel. You don't even have to remove the door to make the repair.

Start with any of the hinges, but work on one at a time. A tapered shim wedged between the floor and outside corner of the opened door will keep the door in place while you make the repair. To remove a stripped screw that won't back out, work a thin blade beneath the edge of the screwhead and pry gently while you turn it with a screwdriver (wear safety glass es). With the screws out, flip the hinge leaf out of the way. Drill out the holes with a bit the same size as the dowel, in this case 3-8ths of an inch. Cut the dowels slightly shorter than the depth of the hole and coat them liberally with yellow carpenter's glue before tapping them into place with a hammer. Although yellow glue sets up quickly, it's best to let the dowels sit for at an hour or two before you drill new pilot holes and drive in new screws. If you use traditional wood screws (those with tapered threads and a thicker shank near the head), you should use a matching tapered bit so the shank doesn't bind in the hole. Or, drill two holes, one for the threaded portion of the screw and a larger pilot for the shank. A dab of wax will make it easier to drive the screws. Use large-diameter screws (12 or 14). Steel screws are strongest, but use brass if it matches the hinge. Brass is soft, so drive steel screws into the hole first to cut the threads and then replace them with brass screws. Avoid drywall screws. Their thin shanks are brittle.

spreading from the garage to the house.

If you want to install a pet door, look for one where your pet wears a special collar that unlocks the door. Pet doors of this type do exist. How about that — a house key for Fido. And, be sure that the door is the smallest size that your pet can get through.

liquid buffing or paste wax. The wax should fill in the nail and staple holes and result in a smooth and uniform finish. If, on the other hand, the floor has a polyurethane finish, buff the surface with a 3M maroon buffing pad and apply one or more coats or new polyurethane - buffing between coats. A 10-inch flat pad works best when applying finish.

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