

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: How is Wrentham Antiques' Persian Rug selection?

A: We are proud to offer by far the largest selection of Persian carpets in the area. We recommend you come in and see the variety and depth!

Q: What is the difference between a Persian rug and an Oriental Rug?

A: Oriental rugs are any rugs handmade in Asia or parts of Eastern Europe. Persian rugs are handmade in Persia (present-day Iran). Wrentham Antiques' rug specialist is available to give a free tutorial to you—just come in, call, or email us!

Q: Are Orientals made in Persia better than the rest?

A: While good and bad rugs are made everywhere, Persia has certain natural advantages. First, many regions of Iran produce simply superior rug-weaving wool: long staple, lustrous, and strong. Second, rug weaving is more widespread and longstanding in Persian culture than anywhere on earth. That means that dye traditions, patterns, weaving skills, and wool working traditions have been honed over centuries of experimentation and experience. Persian rugs have been tried and proven true in New England homes for centuries.

Q: Is child labor used in making these rugs?

A: No. Families may work together at home on a rug, but no children are employed in the workshops producing our rugs. Some tribes have no written language, but their textiles have been a means of artistic and traditional expression for centuries. Rugs are their only medium to pass the culture on. Often rugs are made in the leisure months while the flocks graze up in the mountains. The whole family works together, passing the skills and even the vocabulary of tribal motifs from mother to daughter, father to son. This is the only context in which children work on our rugs, and it is a part of their culture worth preserving. In addition to cultural benefit and creating jobs, part of the proceeds on certain natural-dyed rugs is donated for education and well-drilling. Anyway, most large new rugs are made in workshops by adults, paid as skilled trades people.

Q: Now that the embargo is lifted, do we get new Persian rugs?

A: Many. From 1979 to 2001 it was impossible to import rugs made in Iran into the US because of the embargo.

Q: Where are "NHTK" and Baluch rugs made?

A: All the new NHTK (Natural-dye, Handspun wool Turkmeni) rugs are made by migratory villagers originating in Turkmenistan whose range includes parts of Persia (now Iran), Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Baluchi rugs are made in Eastern Persia or Afghanistan.

The Turkmenis and Baluchis migrate across national boundaries, so one can't always say whether the new natural-dye rugs were made in Iran or Pakistan-- a rug may have been started in Afghanistan and then finished in Iran! In any case, the people who weave these do not consider themselves Afghanis or Pakistanis, but consider themselves Turkmenis or Baluchis or Ersaris. Their tribal affiliation is their main nationality. Wrentham Antiques' rug specialist is available to give you further explanation—just come in, call, or email us!

Q: Which rugs use natural dyes, and why?

A: NHTK, Npak, some Persians, and a few others as labeled use natural dyes, which age beautifully, enhance value, preserve the wool fibers, and produce pleasing color variegation. Many antique rugs command huge prices today because of the soft, deep color which can only be achieved by aging a rug with natural dyes. Old chemical dyes sometimes ran or turned gray over the years. New chemical dyes are stable but so perfectly uniform that they detract from the whole idea of an oriental rug as a decorative art expression. Natural dyes are painstakingly extracted from plants and minerals, adding substantially to both the cost and the value of a rug. It requires more labor but over the long term produces much more beauty and uniqueness. Some Persian rug makers have perfected mixing chromium dyes and natural dyes. Wrentham Antiques' rug specialist is available to give you further explanation—just come in, call, or email us!

Q: Which rugs use handspun wool, and why?

A: NHTK and a few others as labeled use handspun wool. Hand spinning adds durability. The unevenness contributes to color variation. All the departures from the tradition of natural dye, handspun wool have been mistakes. They reduced value, durability, and beauty.

Q: Why do some rugs show variation of color in a stripe across the rug?

A: Because wool is died in bundles, and no two bundles take the dye exactly alike. When one dye lot runs out, the rows of knots woven with the next lot may look different. This *abrash* is considered an enhancement if it is not too disruptive.

Q: How are rugs named?

A: Rug names usually include the place of origin, and then add the pattern. Some patterns are named after places where they were first woven, like sarab, mahal, ferahan, heriz, bijar, and kashan, which are all places in Iran. These patterns are then imitated and improvised in other places; for example, the Turkmenis often weave NHTK Sarabs. The Pakistanis make Pak-Kashans, the Indians Indo-Bijars.

Q: What about care of the rug?

A: Vacuum it (careful with the ends-- fringe can get caught in rollers). Once every couple of years have it professionally washed. The key is to make sure that the wash process includes “dusting” which is turning the rug upside-down and beating the back of it or tumbling it to get all the grit out from the base of the fibers. If you just wash the rug, all you do is shine up the tips of the pile, while the sand and dirt build up around the foundation fibers. The sand cuts and the dirt stiffens the rugs, impeding their natural ability to flex with impact, to cushion feet, to resist stress, and to stay clean for a long time. Rugs can absorb an incredible amount of grit and still look good, but eventually they need to be “emptied.” Wrentham Antiques’ rug specialist is available to give you further explanation—just come in, call, or email us!

Enjoy these handmade works of art. Our oriental rugs are practical, durable, natural, movable, and resalable. We are available at any time (by regular hours or appointment) to help you with any phase of your rug-selecting process. Wrentham Antiques’ rug specialist is available to you—just come in, call, or email us!

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