

Characteristics of New Fibers Studied

Synthetic "Miracles" Have Their Own Kind of Disadvantages, Too

By Mildred R. Jensen
Home Economics

"Miracles," observed my philosophic yard man, "is usually got some disadvantages tagging along!"

His sage statement is surely true of the many new synthetic fibers. So much publicity has been given some of their miraculous properties that some consumers are going to be disappointed when they encounter the "disadvantages tagging along."

We have been used to disadvantages in some of the older fibers so long that we do not think about them. We know that cotton fabrics soil easily but wash like a miracle. We know cottons wrinkle terribly (unless they have special treatment) but are easily pressed.

Starting with a fiber you have come to know pretty well, the following list shows the advantages and disadvantages of several of the newer synthetic textile fibers:

Fiber	Is wonderful, in that . . .	But has to be watched because it . . .
Nylon	Its factory-set pleats are the only really permanent pleats — Washes easily and dries quickly. Is strong, elastic and flexible enough to make the sheerest hose ever known — Melts and smolders but does not flame up — Resists moths, mildew, wear and perspiration.	Weakens and dissolves in strong sunshine — Feels hot in close weaves in summer — Gradually builds up soil so that it needs a really good washing occasionally — Needs a little pressing after washing but can be pressed only at the lowest iron setting.
Orlon	Holds crease marks so that pleats are easily pressed back in (but will not hold pleats like nylon) — Can stand long exposure to strong sun — Resists moths and mildew — Feels warm without heavy weights of cloth.	Glazes and is weakened by any but very low temperature iron — Has the clinging due to static electricity unless treated — Still not available in chalk white or all colors — Fleece coats stay prettier dry-cleaned instead of washed as advertised.
Acrilan	Holds pleat marks so can be repeated — Washes easily and dries quickly — Resists wrinkling, sunlight, moths, mildew — Is strong and warm without weight.	Burns like cotton — Weakened by too hot an iron — Builds up static electricity unless specially treated — Color range is still limited.
Dacron	Has crisp feel — Holds creases and pleat marks — Great resistance to wrinkling, moths and mildew and most common stains. Washes quickly and easily.	Melts under high iron temperature and even weakens in very hot water — Builds up static electricity unless treated so that suits pick up lint in cold dry weather — Doesn't absorb perspiration — In blends with wool, it is better drycleaned.
Dynel	Cashmere soft to feel — Holds crease marks — Resists fire, wear, moths, mildew, shrinkage.	Must be washed and ironed at low temperatures — Blends with other fibers are less likely to develop heat damage and static electricity.
Vicara	Warm and pleasantly soft — Little shrinkage and no moth trouble — Absorbs perspiration. Costs less than expensive wools, so is blended with them.	Burns like wool — Weak — Doesn't wear as well as other synthetics.



Ferris Kiehler, Phoenix, watches the fine creased edge of this pleated cloth sample. She has washed it several times.

The University textile testing class examined some blends of these new fibers. Beautiful fabrics were available in dacron and wool; vicara, wool and nylon; orlon and wool; acrilan and rayon, etc. All of the ones studied could be pressed only with a low temperature iron or they showed heat damage.

Many of them pleated easily, but the fabric manufacturer does not guarantee pleats put in by anyone but a commercial pleater. A local drycleaner says pleats in these blends are easily pressed back, but do not last beyond the third or fourth drycleaning.

Probably the most fascinating thing about the blends was the way many troublesome food spots washed out easily. All of the blends faded badly when given anything but the most careful hand washing or drycleaning.

All of the blends showed an amazing recovery from wrinkles, and wrinkled little or none when washed. A few of the fabrics showed no shrinkage at all so that the usual tailoring methods depending upon shrinking out fullness would not work.

Barbara Poer, whose home is in Safford, shows some of the common food and cosmetic materials used in stain tests. The staining material was left on the cloth 30 hours. All of it washed out easily.

