

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Sisal?

Sisal is an extremely rugged natural fiber obtained from the long, knife-shaped leaves of the agave plant. One of the most important agricultural products of the world's tropical regions is sisal fiber. Although the plant is indigenous to the Americas, over half the sisal produced in the world now comes from East Africa. It is generally agreed that the world's highest quality sisal — the longest, finest, and whitest fiber — comes from the plantations of east Africa. After processing, Merida's African Sisal is shipped to Belgium where it is dyed and spun using Merida's exclusive Katani Bora sisal yarn spinning system, then woven into broadloom on modern power looms. Sisal's enormous versatility enables us to produce a range of woven floor covering designs with distinctive weave patterns, bold yarn textures and a wide selection of colors. The inherent qualities of this tough, hard-wearing fiber results in sisal rugs that are naturally sound absorbing, anti-static, and extremely durable.

Does sisal vary in quality?

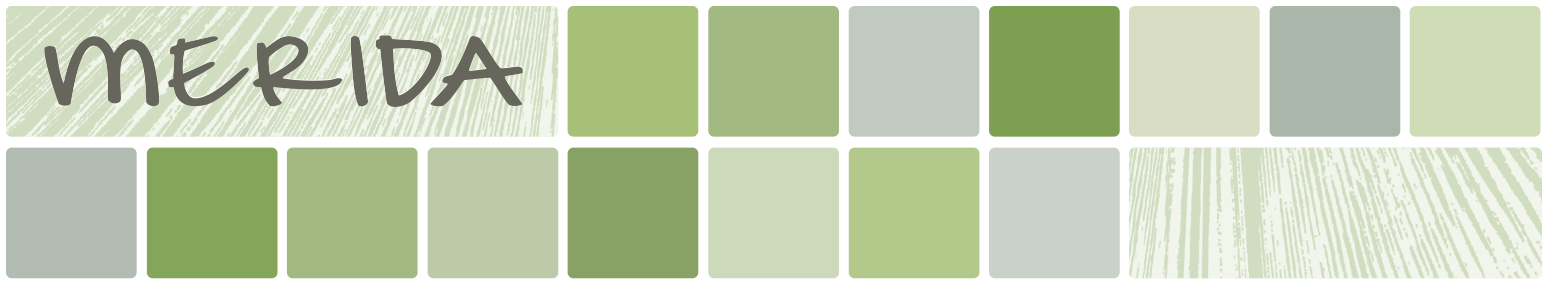
Yes! Quality begins with the selection of the fibers. Sisal plants produce long, green leaves that grow to as much as six feet in length and six inches wide, and weigh up to two pounds each. Fibers are extracted from these leaves by crushing and scraping away the green pulp, leaving the fibers behind. Only clean, white fibers with a long staple length are selected for Merida carpets. When dyed, these fibers produce colors that are more vibrant and even throughout the product. After dyeing, the fibers are carefully spun to form a tight, rugged yarn with fewer "slubs" (thick and thin areas), and clipped to remove coarse, hairy ends. Finally, Merida's sisal yarn is meticulously woven using a proprietary process that produces a tighter, smoother surface than is generally found with other natural fiber floor coverings. We call this process the The Katani Bora Sisal Yarn System. Exclusive to Merida, this symbol is your assurance that the finest quality sisal fibers and manufacturing techniques are used to produce your natural fiber area rugs. The use of this process ensures a superior product: a sisal carpet with a smooth, elegant appearance, that is gentle to walk on, and that offers superior durability. Products using our Katani Bora Yarn System are marked with this symbol.



What is Coir?

Coir, also known as coco fiber, is taken from the fibrous husk that surrounds the common coconut. The term "coir" is considered to be a derivative of the Malayalam word Kayar which means cord, string, or yarn. Coir is one of the





Frequently Asked Questions — continued

toughest natural fibers around. It does not pill, can withstand a great deal of abrasion and is highly rot resistant. The natural resilience and durability of this material make it especially desirable for rugs. The spun yarn that Merida uses for our carpets and rugs is the very best that the coir industry produces. The fibers are the longest and finest available. The natural colors of coir range from tan to golden brown to reddish-brown. In its natural state, this color variation occurs in the yarn and in the carpet at random, producing a shimmer of browns and tans on the floor. The fiber can also be bleached or dyed to any color. Look for our coir products in the C-Koko, Koko and Chroma Collections.

What is Seagrass?

This term is used to refer to a number of different tall plants that grow in wet areas of South Asia, and whose stems have a grass-like structure. The source of Merida's seagrass fibers is a group of sedges or rushes that look a lot like overgrown grasses standing in marshy, brackish fields. It is the fiber in the stems of these plants that we use for carpets and rugs, so the taller the plant, the longer the fiber. Only the longest fibers are used for Merida's area rugs. New seagrass rugs retain the grassy, hay-like scent that is characteristic of the plant. When the rug has been opened and laid on the floor, this scent will dissipate over time. Another noticeable characteristic of processed seagrass is its soft, sage green colors that range from a greenish tan to khaki-olive. Following traditional usage, the fiber is almost never dyed. In each rug you may see this complete range of natural colors in all their lovely variations. Woven into a rug, the result is a durable, resilient floor covering that will bring the look of nature into your home or office.

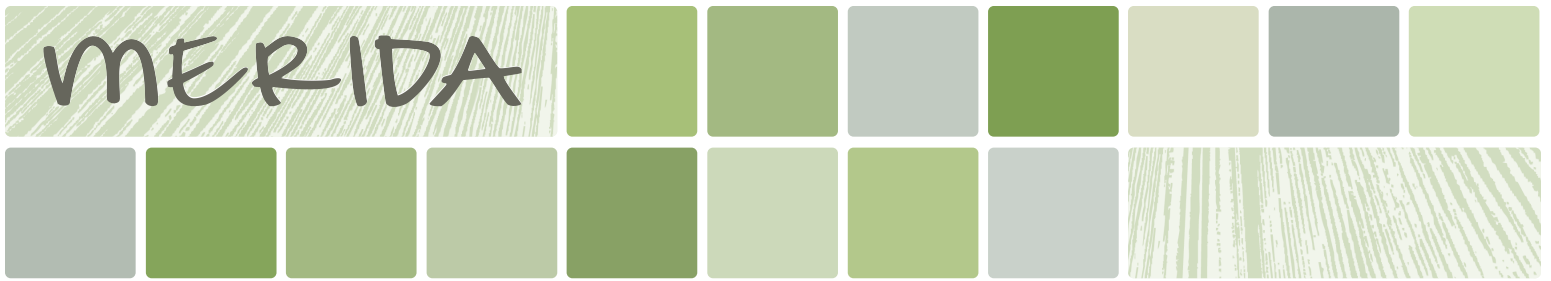
Can I use Seagrass anywhere in my home?

No. Seagrass is to be used in a dry, indoor environment only. Because seagrass undergoes very little processing before being handspun into cords, it may retain some moisture when it is woven. As a result, seagrass products can be susceptible to mold or mildew and should never be used in bathrooms, kitchens, basements, or other damp or humid environments. In humid regions use seagrass rugs only in climate controlled or well ventilated rooms. Seagrass is not available for wall-to-wall installations.

What do you mean by a Paper rug?

Most of us think of paper as a finished product, a product with many uses. Of course, its primary and most ancient use is as a writing surface, but paper can also serve as a raw material, as an ingredient in another finished product. Merida's patented woven paper rugs represent an innovative use of this traditional material. Our twisted paper cord uses pulp from conifers grown in managed growth forests in cold northern climates. Coniferous softwoods produce





Frequently Asked Questions — continued

stronger paper than hardwoods because their fibers are longer. When the pulp is blended, resins are added to coat the fibers, producing an extremely durable, high wet-strength paper. Dyes can also be introduced at this stage to make colored papers. Merida's paper cord begins with a wide roll of paper. This is cut into strips of the appropriate width to make the size yarn we need. These strips are twisted on a high-speed twister that is set to put in the correct number of twists per inch. During this process a wax emulsion is applied to the paper as a lubricant to help it spin smoothly. The coating also adds to the yarn's water resistance. The finished paper cord is shipped to Merida's mill in Fall River, Massachusetts, USA, where it is woven into the Adirondack Collection 100% paper floor coverings. This combination of an ancient fiber source with innovative design and technology produces a strong, smooth-surfaced floor covering that will maintain its beauty for a long time.

Environmental Sustainability: Merida uses virgin paper from managed forests only.

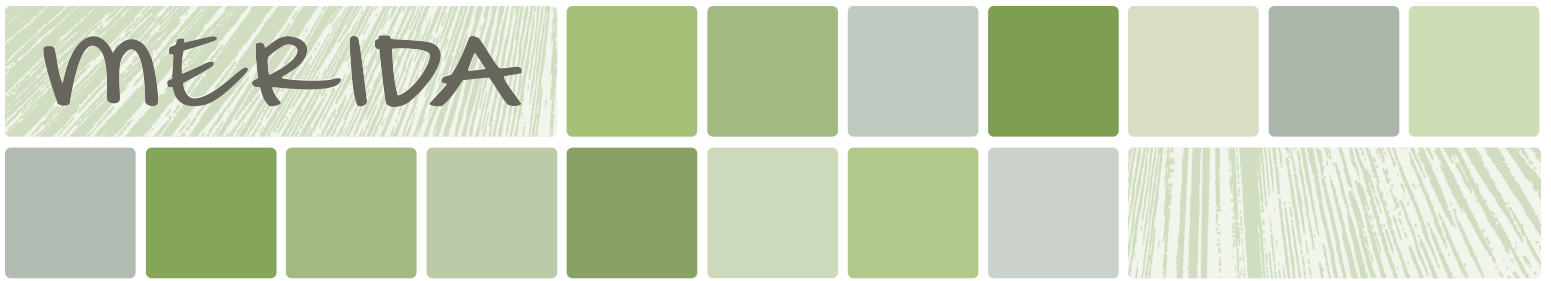
What is Jute?

This fiber is obtained from the stalk of several species of plants in the corchorus genus. This species grows in hot, humid climates and produces a fiber that is long, lustrous, resilient, hard wearing, and soft to the touch. Though jute's natural color is in the light tan to brown range, it both bleaches and dyes well. Jute can be spun into relatively fine yarns as well as heavy cords. It is used to produce rugs with bold, heavily textured floor coverings consistent with more informal settings. Jute is resistant to mildew and mold; however, the fiber will deteriorate if consistently exposed to moisture and sunlight. Merida's jute rugs are made with the finest fiber available. Our jute is selected for fiber length, flexibility, strength, and luster, and is carefully spun to produce woven floor covering designs that are textural and distinctive.

How is Wool different from Vegetable or Plant Fibers?

Unlike the plant fibers we have described, wool is an animal fiber, taken from the skin of sheep. Its unique characteristics make wool the classic floor covering material. Wool is a protein fiber, not cellulose like most plant materials. Its outer layer is a thin water-repellent coating that resists the absorption of water. This is why a wool carpet allows liquid spills to bead up on its surface. Wool also naturally possesses a crimp, which makes it springy and resilient, enabling a wool rug to resist crushing from the weight of furniture. Woolen yarns, because of the structure of their fiber, trap air, making wool rugs great insulators of heat and sound. For all these reasons, the presence of wool in a rug signifies quality, durability, safety, comfort, and beauty.

To achieve the best carpet yarn, Merida's uses a number of different kinds of wools. The Metropolitan Collection rugs are made using 100% New Zealand wool, and our flat-woven rugs use a blend of crimped wools to add resilience and



Frequently Asked Questions — continued

bounce to the carpet, and longer, coarser wools to contribute character, luster, and abrasion resistance. This superior blend is given just the right amount of twist when it is spun to produce strength and longevity, as well as a pleasant touch underfoot. Ultimately, the presence of wool in a carpet signifies quality, durability, safety, comfort and beauty. More and more it is coming to mean luxury, as the proliferation of synthetic fibers has come to dominate the carpet market.

Can I use a natural fiber rug on my porch or screened in lanai?

No. Aesthetically natural fibers are often a first choice for these kinds of living spaces, but because they are naturally absorbent, they are recommended for dry, indoor use only. Exposure to changes in humidity and other elements can cause excessive wear and a potential environment for mold growth.

How can I purchase Merida Meridian floor coverings?

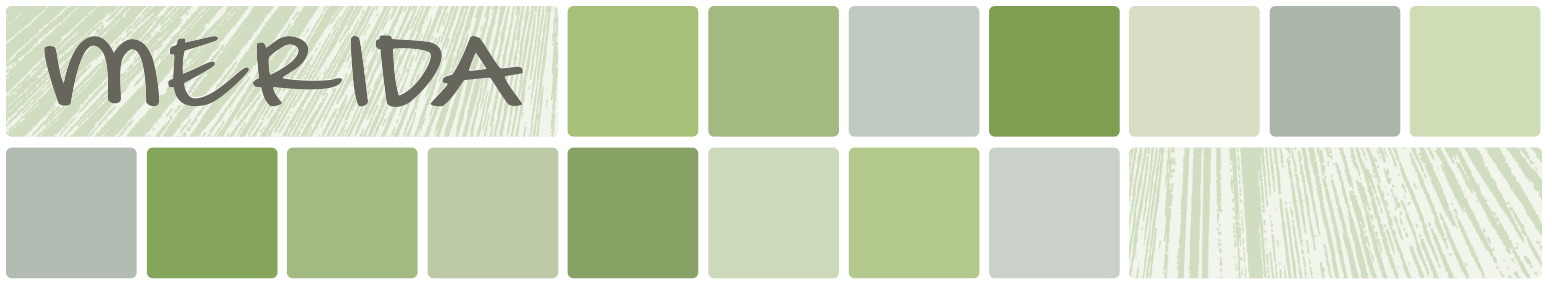
To find a retailer near you please use our where to buy section. If you are a member of the Interior Design Trade please contact us for new account information and/or a representative near you.

What are the variations in color/yarns in my rug?

Merida Meridian is committed to providing the highest quality natural fiber flooring. Even the most carefully selected and woven natural fibers will reflect certain variations seen in nature, such as those in color and fiber thickness. Similarly, pattern differences amounting to as much as two inches in the warp and weft (yarns running length and width-way) can occur. These subtle variations are the characteristics of natural materials. We are careful to use the best available dyes, and even they will vary a little from one dye lot to another. All fibers, both dyed and not dyed will change over time, especially when exposed to direct sunlight.

Will my rug change color or fade over time?

Placing these natural fibers in direct sunlight several hours a day can, over time, result in the fading of dyed materials and the gradual darkening of the un-dyed fibers. Fabrics and fibers, no matter what they are made of and no matter if or how they are dyed, will change to some degree if exposed to direct sunlight all day. Merida's dyed colors are manufactured using the very highest quality dyes and state of the art dyeing equipment. Nevertheless, both they and the natural colors, if placed in a sunny location, should be turned occasionally.



Frequently Asked Questions — continued

What is the best way to care for and clean my rug?

Please visit our Care & Maintenance section for detailed instructions.

Do I need a rug pad?

Most of our rugs have a latex backing, making it unnecessary to place the rug over a separate pad. The latex back provides a nonskid surface, as well as a cushion and insulation against cold floors. For those rugs in our collection which have a jute or cotton backing (as in those in the Lana, Metropolitan and Viewpoint Collections) a nonskid pad is recommended.

What does Contract vs. Residential usage mean?

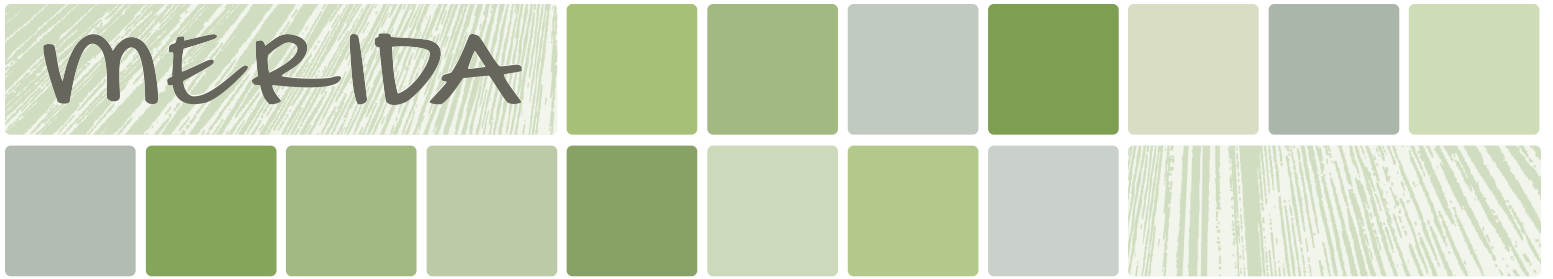
On the individual style pages, we provide "usage" recommendations based on a rating system used in the floor covering industry. This will help you choose the best flooring material for your particular application.

- **Residential:** Appropriate for most applications in private homes.
- **Light Contract:** Serves well in residences, showrooms, and executive offices.
- **Medium Contract:** Can be used in those settings that are exposed to more traffic and some soiling.

Do you have a soil protection treatment?

SiSeal Fiber Protection—

Merida strongly recommends that all of our natural fiber materials, with the exception of the Marine, Lana, Viewpoint and Metropolitan Collections, be treated with SiSeal Fiber Protection. SiSeal provides some protection for the fibers against liquid spills and soils. Nevertheless, your immediate attention to all spills is extremely important for spot removal on natural fibers. SiSeal reduces the rate of absorption, allowing spills to be easily cleaned if this is done in a reasonable period of time. While it is not possible to guarantee 100% protection from staining, we feel that the measure of protection that SiSeal provides is well worth it. Ask about it wherever you order your Merida rug.



Frequently Asked Questions — continued

Do you offer custom sizes? Can I get any size or shape rug?

At Merida, "custom made is our business. Our broadloom materials can be cut to almost any size or shape. Octagons, Ovals, Circles, L-shaped cuts and fireplace cut outs are just a few options for sizes and shapes. Another way to make your rug unique, is to consider an unusual edge finish, such as a woven tapestry, soft suede or leather. To design your own custom area rug, visit our where to buy section for a Merida dealer near you.