

Fabulous Summer Fabrics

When humid days and nights roll around, deciding what to wear so you can be comfortable is challenging. Whether we know it or not there are two main fabrics that answer the call—*cotton and linen*. Knowing about these fabrics and their care can help you make more informed choices when purchasing items at the Goodwill Retail Store and Donation Center. In this column we'll cover the history, facts and care of these two popular types of cloth!



LINEN

Linen is a fabric that is made from the flax plant and is considered a "natural" fiber. Linen has been around since biblical times or before. Used in ancient mummies bandages and believed by some to be the fabric burial cloth of Jesus. It is still a very popular fabric for all kinds of uses. In clothing, linen is a "go to" fabric for some of the world's top designers. Linen is manufactured and sold throughout the world and is truly a "global" fabric. Sometimes it is blended with other types of material like cotton, wool, silk or synthetics.



Linen is really known for being comfortable to wear in warmer climates because it allows the body to receive airflow, thus keeping you cooler. From the little black dress, to resort wear and business attire, linen truly never goes out of style!



While many people avoid linen because it has a tendency to wrinkle, you should keep in mind that this is a natural state for this fabric. Look for some linen slacks, a tunic top or casual dress to start your summer wardrobe. Most linen can be washed at home by hand or machine. For the best results you can have your clean linen items professionally pressed. "Press only" service costs much less than regular dry cleaning.



COTTON

Cotton is a natural fabric made from the cotton plant and is as ancient as linen, with examples found in Mexican caves thought to be 7,000 years old. (Organic cotton is grown without the use of commercial pesticides and fertilizers.)



According to my research, U.S. textile mills use approximately 7.6 million bales of cotton a year. Of that, 57% is converted into fashion apparel. Interestingly, most of its usage is for men and boys' clothing. Found in everything from coats and jackets to foundation garments, cotton supplies over 70% of this market, with jeans, shirts, and underwear being major items.



For summertime, cotton is great because it absorbs perspiration, thus keeping the wearer more comfortably cool.



Cotton fabrics can be machine washed and dried. Fabrics that are 100% cotton can and do shrink if they have not been treated with a durable press or shrinkage resistant finish. Sun exposure can cause fading of colorful cotton prints, and can yellow whites by causing them to oxidize. Colored cotton garments will hold their color longer if they are washed in cool water. White cotton garments can be bleached, but too much can literally destroy the fibers.

Keep in mind that cotton fibers can be found in sweaters, jeans and heavier items as well, not just breezy skirts, slacks, and tops. A pair of linen slacks can virtually be worn year round by pairing them with a t-shirt or camisole and sandals in the summer, or dressing it up with a sweater and pumps for the fall. Versatility would be the key when talking about these two fashion icon fabrics!



Now that we know so much about these trusty summer friends, I would suggest that you go shopping at the Goodwill Retail Store and Donation Center to update your "cool" factor by choosing some garments made with them!

