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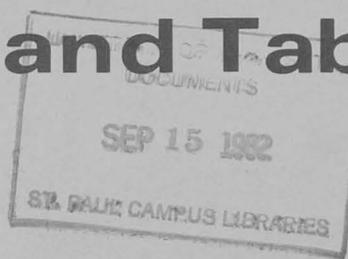


Inexpensive & Creative

IDEAS

Chairs, Sofas, and Tables

Harold H. Alexander



Chairs, Sofas, and Tables

Well-designed and well-made major pieces of furniture are always good investments. Even if only one or two "good" pieces can be purchased at first, it is far better to do that and fill in with temporary pieces and accessories than to squander available economic resources with an array of less expensive and poorly made furniture.

There are times, however, when resources may not permit buying even the most basic pieces. Therefore, these may have to be temporary. The following ideas are only a few of the ways "seating and surface" furniture can be created. Look around, what other forms and materials are similar to chairs, sofas, and tables but are not usually used that way? Can they be adapted by you for less expensive, but exciting and functional furniture?

Seating – single

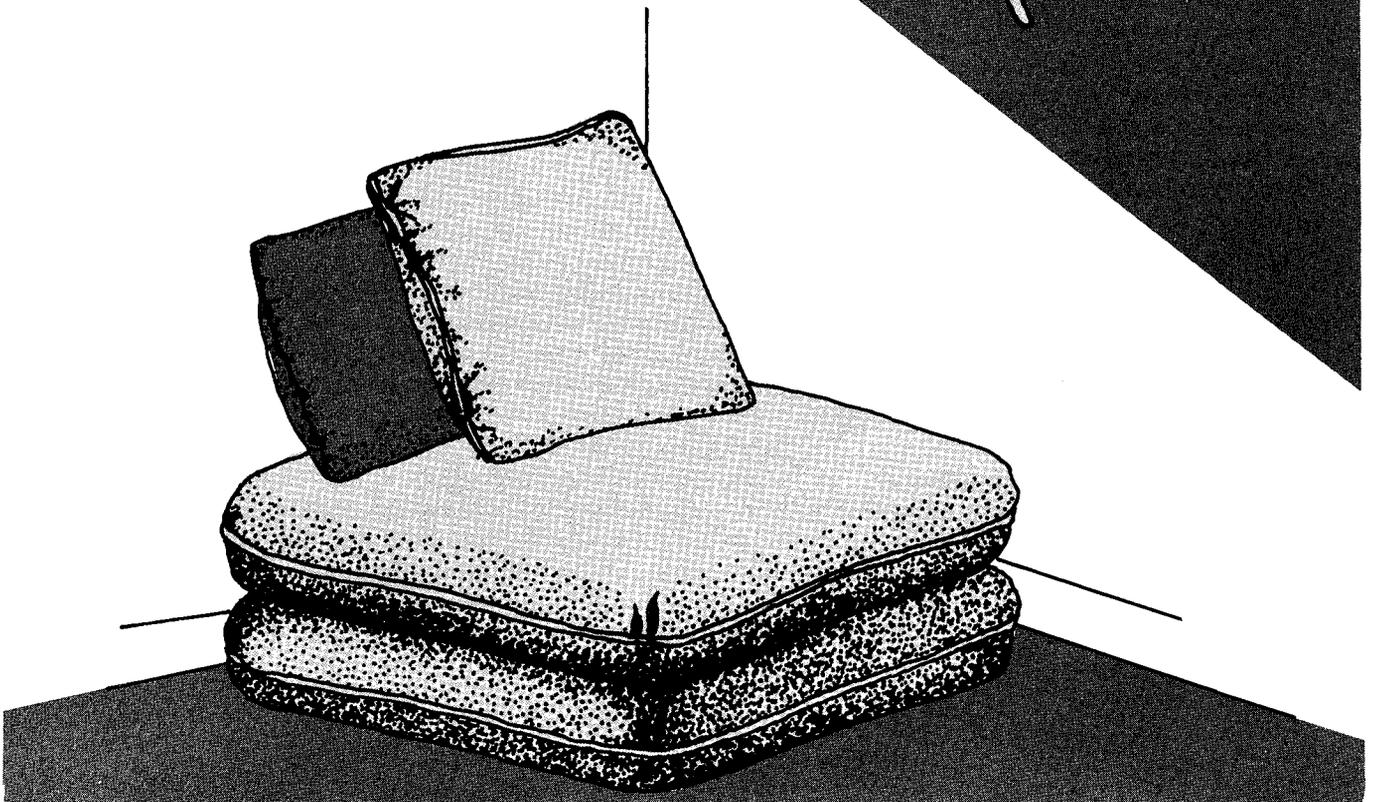
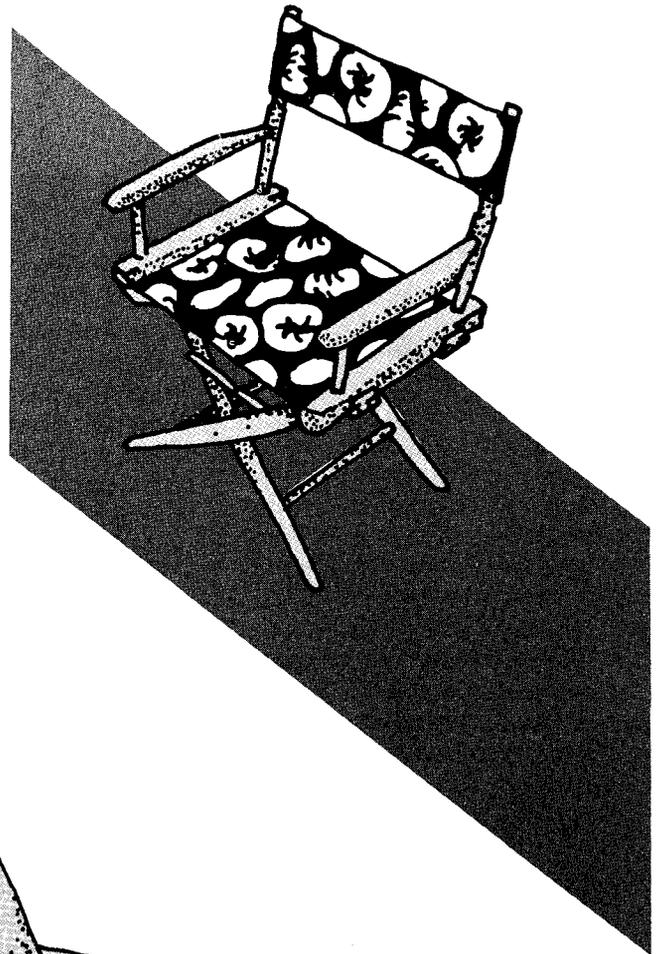
Almost anything with a raised surface can be sat on—if strong enough. Sitting on the floor or near it has become accepted in almost every setting. A stack of floor pillows is a convenient way to provide additional seating.

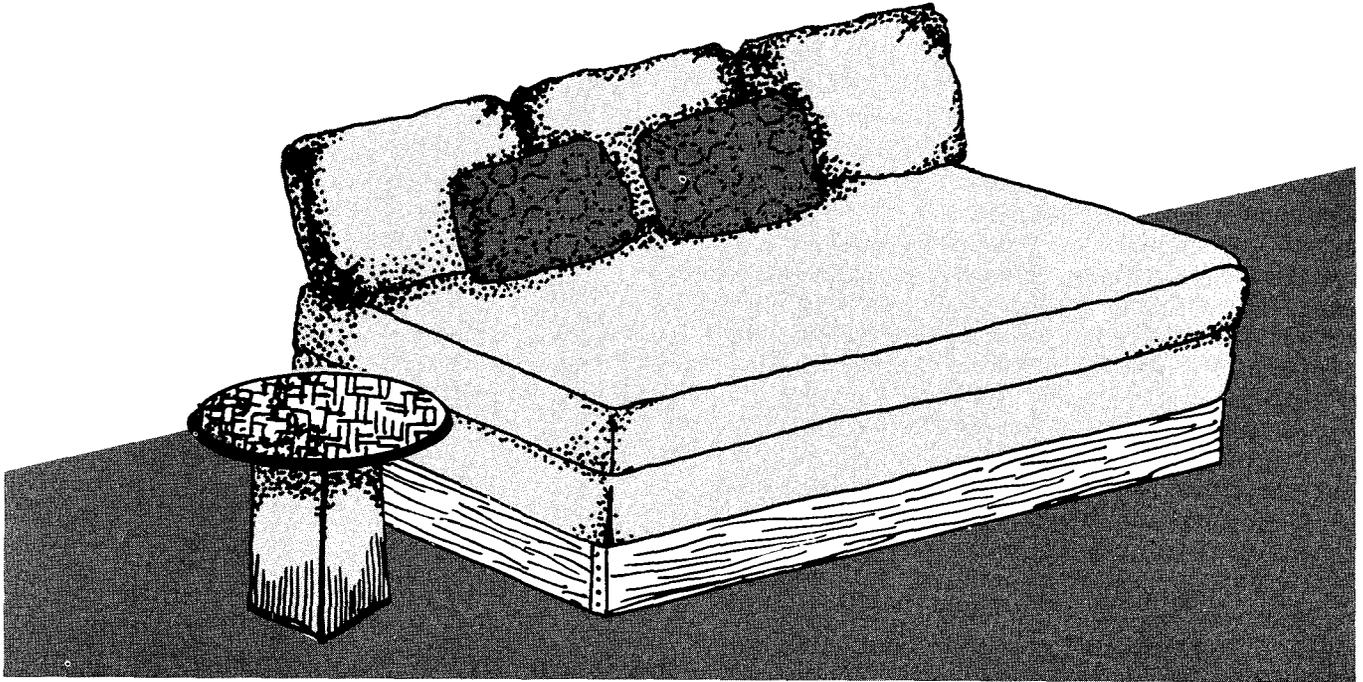
Old, used, or unpainted stools and chairs can be made attractive by painting, cleaning, or the simple addition of colorful pads and cushions.

For the automobile buff, one or two automobile wheels welded or bolted together and placed horizontally, topped with a thick pad, can be interesting conversation pieces. (They also can provide sturdy bases for tables.)

Sections of old theater seats on each side of a table can provide comfortable, but unusual seating for dining.

The well-known director's chairs, bean bag chairs, and sling chairs offer inexpensive alternatives to more traditional chair forms. Incidentally, these three chairs come in a variety of qualities, materials, and prices, yet differ little in design. Each can be upgraded considerably by the replacement or covering of the original seat surfaces with better quality materials.





Seating — multiple

Couches or multiple seating units are some of the more difficult pieces of furniture to buy inexpensively. Consequently, a good couch or sofa is often one of the first and better buys in home furnishings. However, there is no law that one must have a couch. There are frequent examples of very functional and well-designed living spaces without a couch. Before you buy a couch, notice just how often people choose to sit on a couch in formal and informal situations. Unless the room is very crowded and seating is limited, often a three seat couch is occupied by only two people. Perhaps two chairs that occupy less space might be a wiser use of that space.

There are some multiple seating suggestions that cost less than a couch.

Use a twin bed or cot. A twin size box spring and mattress is 39 inches wide, which is too deep to sit on comfortably. It won't give back support and still let your feet rest on the floor. Lots of pillows, a bolster, or even a back rest covering part of the width can convert a twin bed into a comfortable couch; however, there are narrower cots: 30 inches is a common width. These require fewer back pillows. Both the twin bed and cot can provide comfortable sleeping facilities for you or your guests.

A panel door or piece of plywood, supported on blocks or short legs, topped with a 3- or 4-inch slab of urethane foam can also serve well as a multiple seating unit. With a slight downward slope toward the back, sitting comfort will increase. When constructing any seating unit, always try to keep height comparable to or a little higher than regular seating.

Whether using springs and mattresses or slabs, a simple throw over the whole unit will often suffice. Easily made fitted covers can also change the appearance, making the unit more tailored. Of course, pattern, color, and texture will change the visual quality considerably.

An idea that requires a little carpentry skill and a source of raw materials is a somewhat unusual inflated couch. A box-like frame is constructed and the seat and back areas are filled with large commercial plastic milk containers inflated with air. These containers may or may not be covered. Inflated furniture, an exciting development of a few years ago, still offers design possibilities.

A baby bed with a few alterations and possible hidden structural strengthening can become a very attractive two-seater. Older metal ones are especially adaptable for this.

Tables

Essentially, a table (like seating) is a flat, horizontal surface supported a distance from the floor. This means almost any flat, horizontal surface that is stable and above the floor can be used as a table. Immediately, one thinks of surfaces such as wide boards, plates of glass or plastic, panels of plywood or flush doors supported by blocks, sawhorses, boxes, or any kind of legs. (Remember, a table with three legs is *always* more stable on uneven floors than one with four or more.) The variety is limited only by the imagination.



A collection of old wine bottles glued with epoxy and turned over so the bottoms become the top surface is an unusual, yet very serviceable low table. Also a collection of soft drink or beer cans can be used as a table base. An added slab of glass, plastic, or wood creates a smoother or larger top.

An alternative to a regular table is the large spool that holds telephone and electrical wire. These spools come in several sizes, and today some are metal and plastic as well as wood. The wooden spools, usually made of rough sawn wood, seem especially appropriate in exterior and interior settings that are more rugged. Usually these can be obtained inexpensively.

Tables used for games and cards and subject to cigarette burns can be given a new lease on life by inlaying coins to cover the burn marks. The procedure is quite simple. Holes are bored the size of a coin and deep enough to allow the top surface of the coin to be even with the surface of the table. A bit of glue will deter "sticky fingers." Perhaps the coin used is the fine for the burn.



The wire or plastic crates for milk bottles can be used in a variety of ways as table bases and as containers for various articles. A high tech version can be purchased in many stores. Whether they are the actual milk crates or are facsimiles purchased from a store, these can be used singly or in combination.

Stacked or folded corrugated cardboard panels can serve as table supports. Despite its fragile look, corrugated cardboard is surprisingly strong. Make sure the table is stable as the cardboard is lightweight.

White styrofoam packing blocks (a mold for the product which was packed) can be glued into handsome table bases. A glass or wooden top can be added.

Of course, almost any box can be used for a table. Seen more and more is the table covered with a floor length cloth. As long as the hidden support is sturdy, it doesn't matter what is underneath.

A thick slice of a log or tree stump is seen frequently in California or Florida interiors. With the abundance of wood available in Minnesota, this seems an appropriate alternative for tables, especially in a rustic setting.

Other publications in this series of *Inexpensive and Creative Ideas* include: Extension Folder 642, *Furniture and Interiors*; Extension Folder 644, *Lighting, Accessories, and Storage*; and Extension Folder 645, *Walls, Windows, and Floors*.

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