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Primping the patio: Yes, worn outdoor furniture can be restored

BY RUSS HEAPS

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Here's the sad truth about patio furniture: Exposure to the sun, body oil, salt air, pool chlorine, suntan lotion and bird poo will kill your casual furniture dead, dead, dead. It doesn't stand a chance. Nope, never did.

Your chairs and lounges may hold out for a few or even several years, but eventually they will succumb to the elements, as well as normal wear and tear.

When casual furniture is beyond the point of just looking bad to being unserviceable, the choice is whether to refurbish or replace. More often than not that decision will be based on the quality. If a six-piece set was purchased at a big-box store for \$250, the

manufacturer probably didn't intend for it to be repaired, and it makes sense to respect those wishes. Replacing will be cheaper than refurbishing. It's disposable; let it go.....



PERILS OF WICKER

Wicker engineered for open-air applications is treated with a plastic resin protecting it from nearly everything but wear and tear. It will eventually break down and can't be repaired.

Alicia Kaper, the wicker guru at CSNstores.com, cautions that you use indoor wicker outside at your peril. Stains such as mildew can be removed with a solution of three-quarters cup of bleach in a gallon of water, but the entire piece of furniture should be cleaned to avoid spotting.

According to Kaper, homeowners can try simple repairs on indoor wicker: "You can buy cane at any craft store; it and some wood glue can take care of most minor repairs."

Casual furniture cushions are basically disposable. Most are treated to withstand the elements, but will wear out. Follow the directions on the cleaning tag to determine how best to clean them. Usually some mixture of laundry detergent and water and a soft brush will do.

All our experts were emphatic about preventative measures to prolong casual furniture's life. Regular cleaning was at the top of the list. Outdoor furniture should be cleaned once a week.

"Their furniture would last much longer if people would just clean it more," Mattingly says.