

HOUSE & HOME

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HOUSE PROUD

A. PVC and neoprene cords[®] are among the abominations of the lighting world. But it is rare to find a lamp that does not have one of them, whether it is trailing from a \$285 architectural Tizio Classic or a \$14.95 Chinese ginger jar.

The most attractive solution is an old-fashioned one: fabric-covered cords. In New York, the Oriental Lamp Shade Company will replace plastic with silk cord in white, gold or brown, above, for about \$65. It has two locations: 816 Lexington Avenue (63rd Street), (212) 832-8190; and 223 West 79th Street, (212) 873-0812; www.orientallampshade.com.

Rayon-covered cord can be ordered in black, brown, gold or white from the Antique Lamp Company in Buffalo, at 90 cents a foot (leaving the rewiring up to you); (716) 871-0508 or antiquelampco.com. Antique Lamp is also a source for old-fashioned flat Bakelite plugs in brown or white, at \$2 each.

Stone Standard in San Antonio offers a vintage-style "twisted pair," cord, each strand covered in cotton, at \$1.10 a foot. Stone Standard also has vintage rubber plugs, \$5 each, and dimmers that plug into a socket and can serve more than one fixture, about \$20; (210) 738-1060 or www.stonestandard.com.

Rewiring a lamp isn't hard, but it has to be done with the right materials. When Underwriters Laboratories puts its stamp on a fixture, it has reviewed parts and assembly. "Representative samples of a particular product have been submitted to U.L., tested by U.L. and have passed U.L. standards," said John Drengenberg, the consumer affairs manager for Underwriters Laboratories. "So if you are going to have a lamp rewired, make sure every replacement part is U.L. listed."

What do the pros do?

A. Decorators often give collections a unified look by establishing a shared characteristic — color, size or character — and arranging the objects in one place. Few people understood effective tabletop arrangements better than the British decorator David Hicks, who died in 1998. He called them *tablescapes*, and his directive for assembling them was typically uncompromising.

As he explained in "David Hicks on Decoration" (Leslie Frewin, 1966): "If you are a collector of objects like decorative eggs, beautifully shaped pebbles, snuffboxes — whatever it is — mass them together on one table. They look so much better grouped than dotted around the room."

Hicks created *tablescapes* in the homes he shared with his wife, Lady Pamela, and their three children. One was set on a granite tabletop and included objects like a footed cup and a covered box, all made of porphyry, a finely speckled volcanic rock. Another table he massed with red and orange objects (a fist-size chunk of glass, a 19th-century porcelain plate) interspersed with vases filled with similarly colored flowers (narcissi, daffodils, a single orchid).

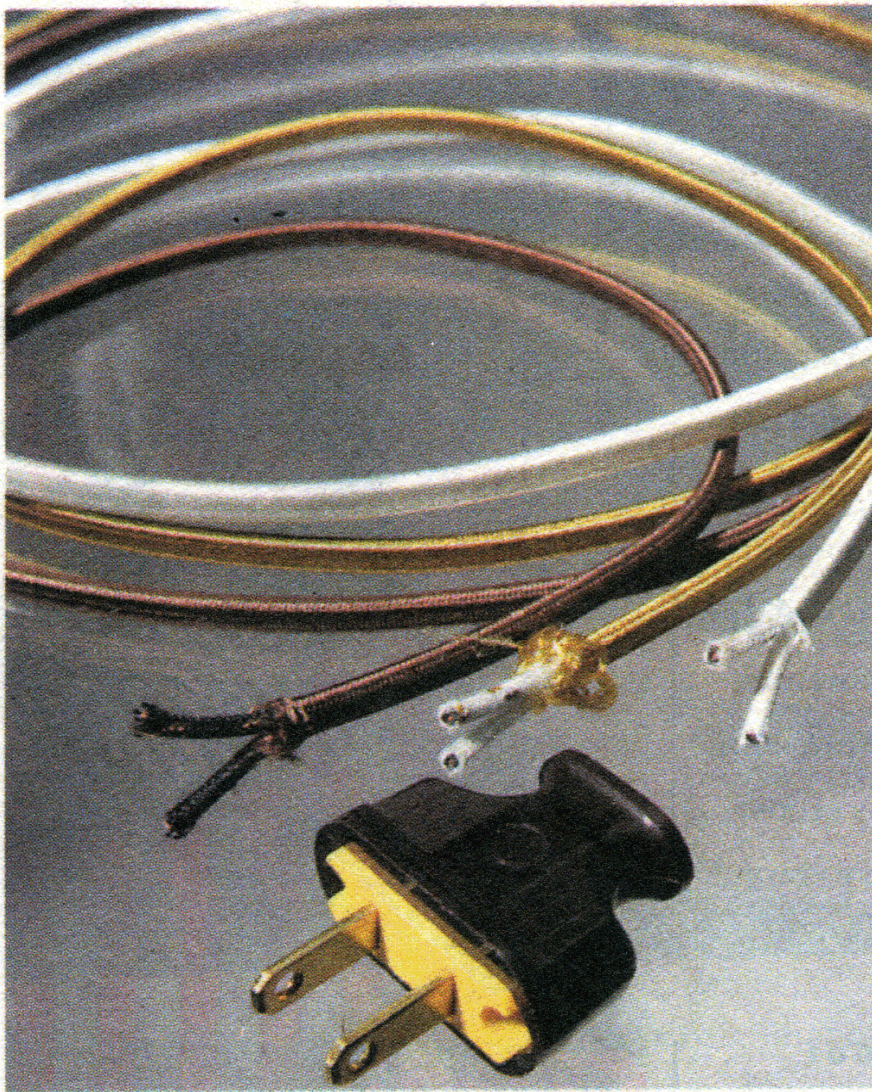
Color-conscious arrangements like these look well organized and are easy on the eye. They also prove that almost any two treasures can go together, no matter their styles, so long as the tones and scale are in harmony.

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Questions about décor may be sent by e-mail to room@nytimes.com. Unpublished questions cannot be answered individually.

ROOM TO IMPROVE

Mitchell Owens

Q *I hate plastic lamp cords. Is there an alternative?*



Lars Klove for The New York Times