

## **HOW TO BUY AND CARE FOR YOUR SILK GARMENTS-PART 1 (45)**

**As a garment analyst I am amazed at the amount of complaints I have received on damaged silk garments. Many consumers have problems with silk garments because they do not fully understand how to buy and care for their silk garments. The first step in understanding about silk is to learn what the silk fiber is. Silk is universally accepted as a luxury fiber. The slogan “Only silk is silk” emphasizes its uniqueness. Good quality silk fabrics have desirable hand and draping qualities. The look and texture of silk can be varied due to different manufacturing processes. Silk can have a smooth lustrous look, a linen look, wrinkled or a sueded look. It can also have a stiff or soft feel. The different types of silk are: (a) cultivated silk-is the smooth fine fiber produced from silk worms that feed on mulberry leaves. (b) wild or tussah silk-a tan colored fiber from the uncultivated silk worm which feeds on scrub oak. Shantung, pongee and honan are fabrics made from wild silk. (c) Dupioni silk-comes from two silk worms that spin their cocoons together. The yarn is uneven, irregular and large in diameter. (d) Sueded silk-the surface of the silk has been abraded to create a soft texture. (e) Washable silk-a silk garment that has been pre-washed to provide consumers with a more casual look. (f) Sand washed silk-a silk that has been subjected to a washing using sand and chemicals that gives the silk a soft, used and distressed look. (g) Wrinkled look-the fabric has been subjected to heat, moisture and mechanical action that imparts hard breaks and wrinkles in the fabric. Silk is used for a wide range of women’s garments including gowns, dresses, separates and scarves in both woven and knitted fabrics. Men’s garments include suits, jackets, sport shirts and ties. Silk is commonly used in draperies, bedspreads, comforters and furniture covers.**

### **WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN BUYING SILK GARMENTS**

**It is important for the consumer to examine garments carefully before buying them. There are many inherent problems that you should observe before buying the silk garment.**

- (1) Fading-Silk can fade even while hanging in a store window or even on the store racks. Silk is prone to light fading as well as airborne gases found in ordinary air. Before buying, examine exposed areas of the silk garment with unexposed areas such as the underside of the garment.**
- (2) Bonded Silk-Manufacturers often bond two fabrics together to add stiffness and feel to the fabric. The bonding process is often not permanent and you may see some areas that will pucker and bubble. The most affected areas are on the chest area of the garment. If you purchase this garment you can expect the puckering to become worse during wear and subsequent cleaning.**
- (3) Beaded Garments-Beaded trimming on delicate silk garments should be carefully examined. The stitching may often snap and damage the fragile silk fiber.**

- (4) Silk blended with Wool-When silk is blended with wool the dye on the yarns will often bleed when in contact with water or stains containing water.**
- (5) Labels-When a silk garment is labeled “Spot Clean Only” it is virtually unserviceable. This means that soil and stains can often not be removed.**

**This article will continue in 2 weeks.**