

RAMIE

WHAT IS RAMIE?

Ramie (pronounced Ray-me), having been used for thousands of years, is one of the oldest vegetable fibers. Ramie is a bast fiber, meaning it is derived from plant stems.

Ramie is a member of the nettle family of plants. It is a hardy perennial which produces a large number of un-branched stems from underground rhizomes. The stems of ramie grow to a height of 3 to 8 feet.

True ramie or “China grass” is also known as “white ramie.” Leading producers include China, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, Brazil and India.

The process of separating ramie fibers from the plant stems differs from flax in at least one important aspect. Unlike flax, ramie must be chemically treated, usually with caustic soda, to remove gums and pectins from the bast fibers. This is one of the reasons why ramie has not made significant inroads as a textile fiber.

FIBER PROPERTIES

Ramie is a white fiber, high in luster, with an unusual resistance to bacteria and molds. Like other cellulosic fibers, it is very absorbent. Ramie has excellent abrasion resistance and is even stronger than linen (flax).

Ramie is often blended with other fibers because of its unique strength, absorbency, luster and dye-affinity. When blended with high-quality cotton it offers increased luster,

strength and color. When mixed with wool, ramie adds lightness and minimizes shrinkage. When blended with rayon, it offsets low wet strength.



The fabric shown here is 64% wool, 36% ramie. The ramie is the gold or yellow yarn running horizontally (the weft direction).

CLEANABILITY

Ramie, as mentioned previously, is usually blended with other fibers. Each different fiber in the fabric must be considered when choosing the appropriate cleaning method.

The wool/ramie blend shown on this page is readily cleaned with water-based methods. (In fact, the manufacturer’s cleaning code for this fabric is “W,” meaning that wet cleaning is acceptable.) Like other natural cellulosic fibers, ramie fibers have very good wet strength.

Testing shows that this fabric is colorfast to water-based products and also to dry cleaning solvents. Assuming careful testing, most ramie fabrics are likely to be

wet-cleanable with normal methods and chemicals.

SPOT CLEANING

Ramie fabrics can be spot cleaned (assuming very careful pre-testing) using both water-based cleaners such as pHnominal and dry cleaning solvents such as Kleen-Tec.

Strongly acidic chemicals, such as rust removers, should be thoroughly neutralized and rinsed in order to prevent long-term damage to the ramie fibers.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

With proper care, ramie fabrics can last for years. Routine maintenance should include vacuuming, as well as rotating and flipping cushions (where applicable).

The Fiber-Seal Fabric Care System can benefit ramie fabrics by reducing absorbency, helping to resist permanent staining, and ultimately increasing the useful life of the fabric.

ALWAYS TEST CHEMICALS AND/OR PROCEDURES FIRST IN AN INCONSPICUOUS AREA OF THE FABRIC.