

# Patchwork Practicality

Bring out your country roots with quilted decor.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Northwest Log Homes/Living Images photo; Frontier Log Homes/Tim Murphy photo; Sitka Log Homes/Butterfly Designs photo; Wisconsin Log Homes/Roger Wade photo.

**F**or many log-home owners looking to decorate with simple, classic designs, a quilt is a practical and attractive choice that brings color and craftsmanship to the home. With an endless number of pattern, color and fabric combinations, quilts can be customized to just about any design imaginable, and they look beautiful either used as bedspreads or hung on a wall.

In many homes, quilts have deep sentimental meaning, especially if they were crafted by a family member. Quilts are often sewn to mark a special occasion, such as a wedding or the birth of a child, and will routinely incorporate swatches of fabric that bring back a host of wistful memories. A christening gown, prom dress or wedding dress intended to be worn only once can be pieced into a quilt to create a veritable scrapbook of memories that's always on display.

Originally designed as a way to turn leftover bits of fabric into useful housewares, quilting has evolved into a dynamic art form that has created social benefits as well as domestic

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** The intense colors in this nine-patch pattern bring out the lighter hues of the adjacent wall. Quilt designs, including crazy quilts, can be incorporated into pillows, clothing and other textiles. Don't assume quilts are limited to just repeating patterns; this pictorial wallcovering displays a biblical scene. And think creatively when planning quilt decor — these hanging runners add color and texture to otherwise empty space.

ones. Because piecing and sewing together a full-size bedspread takes hours of tedious, intricate labor, quilting bees became common in 19th-century America and provided outlets for socialization as well as a way to get the work done quickly. Although the group activity allowed for many sets of hands, including beginner ones, around the quilting frame, some women were more selective about whom they wanted to work on their designs, so a skilled needle became a valuable asset among social-minded women. Modern quilting clubs offer the same community perks as traditional quilting bees, though groups today gather more for a shared love of the craft than for necessity.



Honest Abe Log Homes/F&E Schmidt photo

Many homeowners choose to display their quilts on a wall so they can be seen every day. The red patches in the above design accentuate similar shades in this great room's curtains, rugs and walls adding pops of color into an otherwise earth-toned room.

As quilters became more experienced, new patterns were formed with names and designs as unique as the women creating them. Using only squares and triangles, simple patterns such as the bear's paw or broken dishes afforded even novice quilters the opportunity to hone their skills on what would eventually become a classic piece. More advanced designs, such as the double wedding ring, displayed the impressive efforts of a more talented hand.

Perhaps most appropriate for a rustic getaway, the log-cabin pattern has become one of the most recognizable quilt designs. Created by sewing strips of fabric around a central shape (usually a square), the design traditionally features a red center, representing a hearth, with light-colored strips on one side and darker strips on the other to portray the sunny and shady sides of a house. The pattern forms a square, which is then pieced together in a block pattern with other squares of the same size.

In a log home, however, any quilt design will bring color and rustic charm to the space it graces. Although practical and attractive on a bed, hanging up a quilt as a wall decoration is another excellent way to display the prized handiwork. One common complaint log-home owners have about their traditional abodes is that the logs overpower the decor and create a dark, imposing feel upon each room. Because their sheer size can cover a lot of blank wall space, and their cheerful colors can brighten an entire room, quilts are an obvious solution to this problem.

Making a quilt by hand takes countless hours of planning and construction (sound familiar?), but you can incorporate your own cherished materials and bring forth a completely customized final product that will be a priceless family heirloom for generations to come. You can also find ready-made quilts in flea markets, antique shops, estate sales and more. And don't forget to check those dusty chests in the attic — you never know what family treasure you might come across that could be perfect for your new home. **CBLH**

## AROUND THE WORLD

**Q**uilts may seem as American as apple pie, but other cultures from every corner of the globe have their own variations that might provide the right fit for your home.

**Ralli** quilting is a traditional form of craftsmanship practiced by women in the northwest India states of Gujarat and Rajasthan and across the border into Pakistan. Like the cross-stitch embroidered samplers popular in Europe and North America during the 18th and 19th centuries, a ralli quilt, covered in multicolored appliqué designs and a variety of stitching patterns, shows exceedingly intricate needlework and exhibits the level of talent and precision of the woman who stitched it.

**Trapunto**, an Italian quilting technique, isn't limited to just bed coverings. It involves sewing together two pieces of fabric and then stuffing the space between with cotton or another form of padding, resulting in an excellent insulating layer for clothing. Many trapunto blankets serve as pictorial storyboards for legendary tales or family histories, and the raised pattern gives the design texture as well as beauty.

**Tivaivai**, from the Cook Islands and French Polynesia, are brightly colored bedcovers appliquéd by groups of women who use the time spent working to socialize and sing together, similar to the traditional American quilting bee. Given as a gift for special occasions, a tivaivai's value is based not upon its monetary worth but instead upon the amount of time, love and care put into the making of the elaborate coverlet.

**Sashiko**, meaning "stab-stitch" in Japanese, is a form of complicated stitch work commonly found in Japanese quilting. Traditionally used to reinforce worn sections of clothing with attractively sewn patches, the art form has expanded to include bedcovers and wall hangings as well.

**Molas** are reverse appliqué designs created by the indigenous Kuna people of Panama and Colombia. Made of thin strips of brightly colored cloth layered over one another, then cut away to create unique designs, the intricate stitching involved shows the level of creativity, skill and precision going into each piece. Molas are traditionally worn as part of a Kuna woman's customary blouse, but modern designs can be found independently in wall hangings, placemats and pillows, or pieced together to form bedspreads.

To give your home international flavor and support the extraordinary talent of quilt craftspeople worldwide, check out the above styles and more at [fairtradequilts.com](http://fairtradequilts.com).