

Decorator's Notebook

Shopping For Chairs And Ottomans

(NAPSA)—There is nothing like sinking down into a plush, inviting easy chair. Such luxury need not be restricted to the den or living room. In a home office or bedroom, an upholstered chair offers a welcome respite.

Here, from the experts at Bernhardt Furniture, is advice on how to select an excellent-quality chair that suits your needs and taste.

•**Know the basic easy chair styles.** Popular options include overstuffed—a full, comfy look achieved by covering the frame with generous fill or stuffing; exposed frame—an elegant style in which parts of the frame are exposed, such as the legs, arms, or back; and tight back—a sleek, more formal design that features a firm, tautly upholstered back.

•**Look for a chair that pairs well with the furniture you already have.** It's perfectly acceptable to mix and match—just seek out a chair with a style that complements your existing furnishings.

•**Choose a sizable chair to give a room dramatic focus.** An oversized chair will add character and visual interest to a space that's grand or small.

•**Have a seat.** Test out a few chairs, and learn to recognize the features that make them feel comfortable to you. Is the padding too hard, too soft, or just right?

•**Look for a chair with a solid structure.** The best chairs have frames that are made of kiln-dried hardwood, and that are joined with firm dowels (metal, plastic or wooden pins often used for support on chairs), or with a combination of glue, staples, and/or corner blocks.

•**Touch.** The chair's uphol-



An inviting chair can make any room a more comfortable haven.

stery should feel good to you, and it should also be durable. Leather, woven wool, tapestry, and upholstery-weight velvet are proven to be wearable.

•**Ask a sales assistant to turn the chair over.** In the finest upholstery, the jute strips (also called sheet webbing), are so tightly woven that you cannot see between them.

The Indispensable Ottoman

Placed in front of an armchair, an ottoman naturally assumes its role as a footrest—a simple luxury for tired feet. Yet, where a coffee table is absent, the ottoman rises to the occasion. Books or magazines sit well here, and a tray is all that is needed to lend a stable, protective surface for glasses and plates.

Feel free to mix and match, especially if you are going to use the ottoman on its own. A chair-and-ottoman set is always handsome, but an ottoman need not be identical to the surrounding furniture in style or upholstery.

For free tip sheets on *How the Pros Do It: Shopping for Chairs and Ottomans* and *Shopping for Beds*, write to: Bernhardt Shopping Tips, 470 Park Avenue South, Suite 10 North, New York, NY 10016. Or visit www.bernhardt.com.