

Good Housekeeping

Making  
Memory Books

# Do it Yourself

Winter 1998/99

DECORATING BASICS • CRAFTS • HOME IMPROVEMENTS • GARDENING

Flea Market  
treasures

pretty  
baths  
on a budget

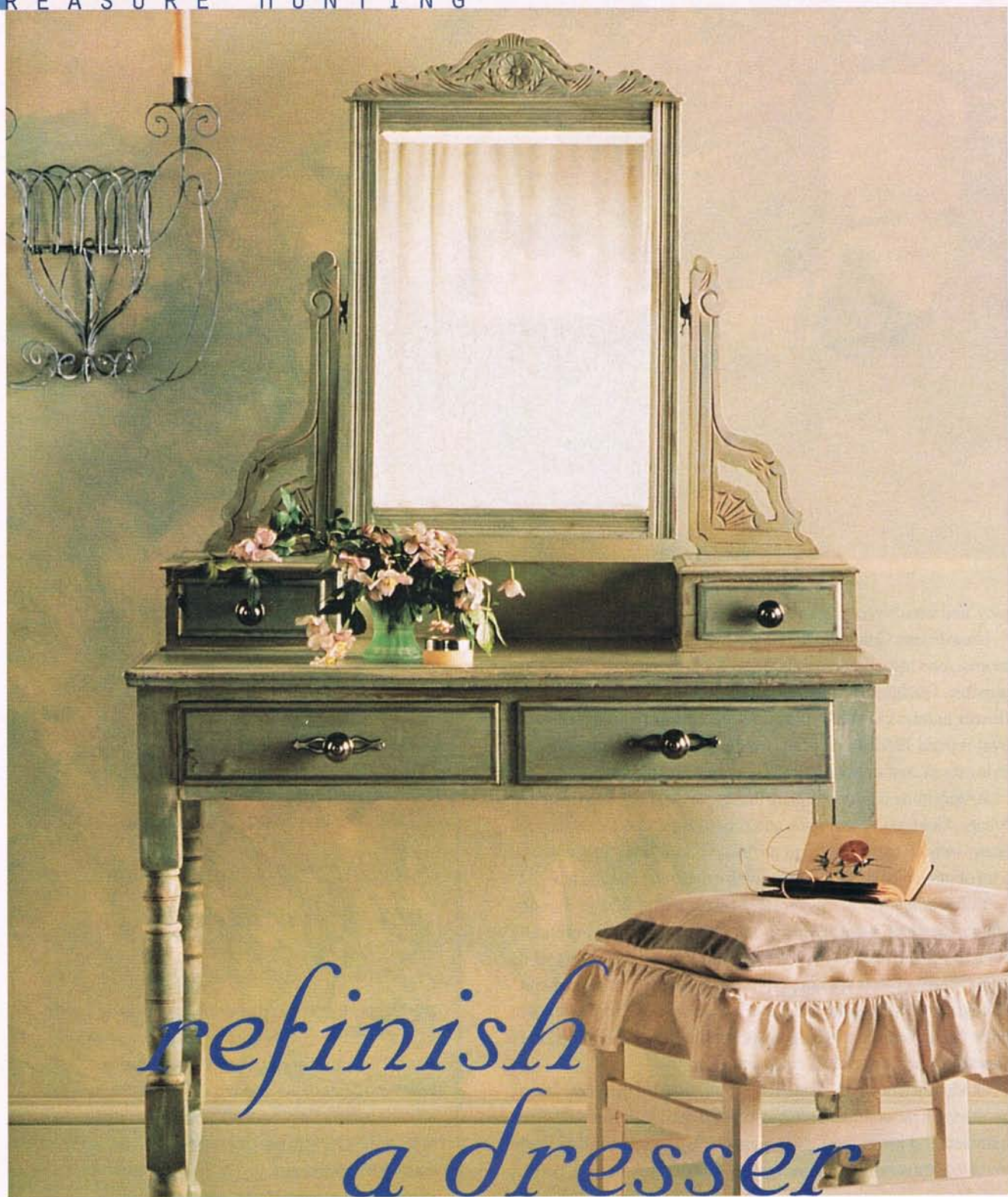
design your  
own fabrics

HEARST SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS



DISPLAY UNTIL MARCH 8  
[www.hearstspecials.com](http://www.hearstspecials.com)





## *refinish a dresser*

**I**t often happens that truly wonderful pieces of furniture are painted over and over in hurry-up attempts to revive yesterday's dresser or table and at the same time have it complement the new wall color in a bedroom or kitchen. By the time the fourth or fifth layer of paint has been applied, the item is ready for the resale shop or flea market. So that's where you should go if you're looking for a beautiful bargain and are willing to spend the time stripping a piece down to the bare wood. Of course, if you remove all the layers of paint and discover marvelous, mint-condition cherry or maple wood underneath, leave it as it is. But what you'll most likely find is a dinged, scarred surface, often of pine, that in all honesty will look better painted. The difference in painting it this time is that you'll be aging the piece in the process so that it will look as it might have a hundred years ago—only better.



1 With a screwdriver, remove handles or drawer pulls from the dresser. Place the dresser on a drop cloth. Following the manufacturer's directions and wearing protective gloves, use a disposable paintbrush to apply a thick layer of paint-stripping gel to one surface of the dresser at a time. Wait 15 to 30 minutes, until the old paint layers bubble. Scrape off as many layers of paint as possible with a putty knife. Apply another layer of gel, if necessary, to get down to the bare wood.

2 When the dresser is completely stripped, allow it to dry thoroughly, then use fine sandpaper to smooth all the surfaces. Remove paint from crevices with a wire brush or old toothbrush. Wipe the dresser with a tack cloth to eliminate dust. Finally, use lint-free cloths to wipe the entire surface with paint thinner, removing any trace of the paint-stripping gel. Allow the dresser to dry thoroughly.

3 Apply a coat of primer with a paintbrush to the drawers and the dresser and allow it to dry. If the wood grain rises underneath the primer, sand the dresser lightly, wipe off the dust, and apply another coat of primer. Next, thin the pale green paint with enough water to give it the consistency of heavy cream. Apply two coats of the pale green paint, letting it dry completely after each coat.

4 Then, use a straightedge and pencil to indicate where the lines will be painted on the dresser top and on the fronts of the drawers. The lines should be about  $\frac{1}{8}$  thick. Place painter's masking tape along the lines, leaving exposed the area to be painted and protecting the surrounding surface. Use your finger to press the tape down along the pencil lines. Cut the tape at right angles in the corners.

5 In the small jar, mix the lining color by adding a small amount of black to the pale green paint. Use a fine artist's brush to apply the paint between the masking lines, being careful not to push the paint up under the tape. Carefully remove the tape after each area is completed. Touch up the background with the lighter paint, if necessary. Allow the paint to dry overnight.

6 Use a soft, lint-free cloth to apply a generous amount of furniture wax to all of the painted surfaces. Rub hard. Some paint may come off in the waxing process, but do not apply so much pressure that you expose the wood. Finish by rubbing the surface with extra-fine steel wool in a circular motion. You may want to take some places down to the primed surface, particularly areas that normally get worn spots. Soften the painted lines by rubbing them with steel wool also. Any wax buildup in indentations will add to the aged effect. Wipe off steel-wool dust with a soft cloth.

## helpful hints

When stripping furniture, be sure it is placed in a well-ventilated room. Remove drawers from the furniture and also remove all the hardware. Stand the drawers on end so that the fronts face up. Do the same with each surface of the piece as you work on it, if that is possible. When stripping legs and other irregular surfaces, use lint-free cloths to remove the old paint residue and use medium-grade steel wool, a wire brush, or toothbrush to clean the indentations. If you are worried that the stripper may raise the wood grain, leave it on for a shorter period of time so that it only bubbles up one layer of paint. Choose a shade for the dresser that is naturally pleasing but brighter than you intend the finished product to be. The waxing process masks the color and tones it down considerably. For this reason, it's a good idea to practice the painting/waxing process on a piece of scrap wood before making a final color selection.

## materials

- Old, painted dresser (or other piece of furniture)
- Screwdriver
- Cloth or paper drop cloth or newspapers
- Protective gloves
- Disposable paintbrush
- Paint-stripping gel
- Putty knife
- Fine sandpaper
- Fine wire brush or old toothbrush
- Tack cloth
- Lint-free cloths
- Paint thinner
- 2" paintbrush
- Latex primer
- Latex paint in a pale green shade (or the color of your choice)
- Straightedge
- Pencil
- Painter's masking tape
- Scissors
- Small jar
- Artist's acrylic paint in black
- Fine artist's brush
- Antiquing furniture wax
- Extra-fine steel wool

