

To Wash Your Vintage Delicate Quilt

This quilt should be hand-washed in bathtub with cold water. Be certain that the sink or tub is very clean and has no residue from cleaning agents that could cause additional damage to the quilt. Use a liquid detergent that is gentle and free of dyes and perfumes such as Orvus Soap, Lux or similar. Do a test for colorfastness before you start to be sure you can wash it, by dabbing the quilt with a wet white paper towel. Leave the paper towel on the quilt for a few minutes to see if any color transfers.

Place a white sheet in the tub, and then your quilt. Fill the tub with cold water, being certain that the entire quilt gets wet. Gently move your quilt around in the water using your hands. Allow the quilt to remain in the water for about 10-20 minutes. Then, drain the wash water and fill the tub again with fresh water. Repeat draining and refilling the tub until the water and quilt are soap free – clear water and no suds.

If this doesn't get the quilt clean, add an oxygen-based cleaner like Oxyclean, mixing a solution according to the package directions for the amount per gallon of water. Completely submerge the quilt in the solution and allow it to soak for at least eight hours. Check the stain. If it is gone, rinse well and dry. If it remains, mix a fresh solution and repeat. It may take several soakings to remove the stain or dirt but it should come out.

Proper drying is also important in keeping your quilt at its best. Wet quilts must be handled gently. Pulling or wringing can break seams and cause damage. The quilt will be heavy and should be dried flat. To lift the quilt from the tub, use the white sheet as a sling. Allow the excess water to drain, pressing gently with your hands to expel as much water as you can. Place the quilt on a bed of heavy towels. Cover with more towels and roll up to absorb water. Resist the urge to twist the towels and quilt, just use pressure with your hands. Move the quilt to another bed of dry towels, spread out flat and allow it to dry. Placing a fan in the room will help to speed the process.

If you have space, place a sheet on the grass outside and spread out the quilt. Cover the quilt with another clean sheet and allow it to dry. Do not dry in direct sunlight, which can cause fading, without the top sheet in place. Never suspend a wet quilt from a clothesline. This causes too much stress on seams and cause tearing and can displace batting.

Display a vintage quilt flat on a bed out of the sunlight, turning regularly to move the points where it hangs over the sides. If stored in a closet, wrap in sheets to keep it clean, and refold every three months.