



SWEET DREAMS: Harlequin Colette Bed Linen 180TC percale from £25, available from www.bedeckhome.com, main image. From top, Nymphaea peony bedding 200TC percale from £20 www.designersguild.com. Pip Studio Melody duvet set 200TC percale £90 www.daisypark.co.uk. Bluebellgray Canna bed linen 220TC sateen from £18 www.houseology.com.



FOR DREAM HOUSES ONLY

Your sheets can affect the quality of your sleep. Jamie Hemsall gives his expert advice.

The National Sleep Foundation is celebrating annual Sleep Awareness Week to raise understanding of the health benefits of a good slumber. Most adults need a clear seven to nine hours, teenagers require around eight to 10 hours and school-age children should be tucked up for between 10 and 13 hours.

Many factors affect how well we sleep and one of these is the fabric of our bedding. Cotton is by far the most popular fabric for sheets in the UK; it reacts to your body, allowing it to breathe and ensures you are kept comfortable without being clammy. However, improvements

in the manufacturing process and finishing techniques mean that other fabrics like polyester and viscose can be viable alternatives. Microfibre bedding is composed of extremely fine polyester fibres, making for affordable and soft bedding that resists pilling more than traditional polyester fabric. It can be a good alternative for infrequently used beds, but is less breathable than cotton so may not be ideal for sensitive skin. Man-made fabrics usually help reduce maintenance, especially as some are specifically designed to minimise ironing.

However, if you enjoy sliding into

crisp, cool sheets then cotton (or at the very least a cotton-polyester mix with a minimum of 80 per cent cotton) really is your only option.

The highest quality and softest cotton sheets are woven using extra long fibres, which are spun into fine, strong yarns. This is a mark of the highest quality and certified long fibre cottons include Egyptian, Pima and Supima (a registered trade mark to look out for).

Obviously, this all comes at a price and standard fibre cottons can still be extremely comfortable. Check the thread-count of your cotton (the number of threads per square inch) as essentially the higher the count, the softer the sheet. The combination of a high volume of thin thread means that you achieve a soft, silky feel that will actually be

GUIDE TO WEAVE

- Sateen is a cotton cloth that is made with a satin weave. This produces a soft feel with a shinier finish, but can be less durable than a tighter weave.
- Percale is a crisp and durable plain weave fabric: it should have a thread-count of at least 180.
- Combed cotton has been combed to remove the short fibres and leave the long ones, resulting in a soft, but strong fabric.
- Cotton Jersey is knitted, rather than woven.

enhanced after washing a number of times.

Good sheets range from around 200 to 800 thread-count; I would ideally opt for something in a 300 to 500 thread-count. You will see higher counts, but there is a diminishing return above a 500 count.

A sheet with a lower thread-count is not necessarily low quality, as the weave and manufacturing processes also make a difference, so one of the most important tests still has to be the common sense approach of physically touching the product. Ultimately, you are looking for something that feels soft to the touch, is easy to launder and gives you a feeling of personal luxury.

■ Jamie Hemsall is a multi-award-winning interior designer, www.jamiehemsall.com.