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System 7.5: Desktop Patterns Control Panel (2/96)

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TOPIC -----

With the new Desktop Patterns control panel in System 7.5, Apple gives you greater control than ever before over the patterns that you can use to decorate your desktop.

DISCUSSION -----

When you first access the Desktop Patterns control panel, a 3.25" by 4" window opens up. This initial "scrapbook" contains 64 patterns that you can view by clicking repeatedly on the horizontal scroll bar beneath the patterns themselves. When you find a pattern that you would like to transfer to your desktop, click the Set Desktop Pattern button.

You can design your own patterns by using a paint-type program (or the paint module within a program like ClarisWorks). The pattern area measures 128 x 128 pixels, so you can create a design up to that size, select it with a marquee tool, cut the selection from the paint document, and paste it into the Desktop Patterns window without distortion. If you paste a pattern smaller than 128 x 128 pixels, the smaller pattern is duplicated without distortion across the desktop after you click on the Set Desktop Patterns button. If you paste a pattern larger than 128 pixels in either direction, a reduced version of the pattern appears in the Desktop Patterns window.

Every time you paste something into the Desktop Patterns window, a new pattern is added to the collection. (You cannot paste text into the Desktop Patterns window, although you can paste an image of text from a paint program.) Regardless of which pattern is open at the time you paste, the new pattern appears after all the others. The pattern that was open at the time of pasting is not deleted. To remove a currently visible pattern from the collection, use Cut from the Edit menu or type Command-X.

The Desktop Patterns control panel supports a maximum image size of 64K. The

maximum number of patterns that can be stored is 226. The patterns are stored in a file called Desktop Pattern Prefs in the Preferences folder inside of the System Folder. If the current Desktop Pattern Prefs file is removed from the Preferences folder and placed elsewhere, a new Prefs file is created the next time you call up the Desktop Patterns control panel. The new Desktop Patterns Prefs file contains the basic collection of 64 patterns. The old file, with all its saved patterns, can be kept and substituted for the current Prefs file whenever desired.

When patterns are cut from the control panel, they disappear from view but remain hidden and inaccessible in the Desktop Pattern Prefs file, where they take up space. Over time, if you do lots of cutting and pasting of patterns, the Prefs file can become quite large. If this happens, you may want to discard it and start over.

In addition to the traditional copying and pasting of images, the Desktop Patterns control panel supports Apple's new drag-and-drop feature. If you drag a pattern out of the control panel window and into a Finder window or onto the Desktop, a file called "picture clipping" is created. This file can be dragged into any Macintosh program that supports drag-and-drop, such as the new Scrapbook. Similarly, you can drag picture clipping files into the Desktop Patterns control panel window from drag-and-drop-compatible programs like the Scrapbook.

Here's one last feature of the Desktop Patterns control panel: if you hold down the Option key on your keyboard, the Set Desktop Pattern button changes to Set Utilities Pattern. When you click on this alternate button, the selected design is used as a background pattern in various Apple utilities. These utilities include Calculator, Find File, Jigsaw Puzzle, Key Caps, and Scrapbook. ** NOTE **: This option does not show up if the Macintosh is limited to Black and White.

With all of these features, the new Desktop Patterns control panel can make your Macintosh more attractive than ever before.

Article Change History:

28 Feb 1996 - Added note about option not available with black & white.

03 Aug 1995 - Corrected minor typo.

16 Feb 1995 - Changed keyword and reviewed for technical accuracy.

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