

RULES OF RATTAN

KEVIN BOLAND, CEO AND FOUNDER OF WEAVE SPECIALIST OHMM, GIVES US THE FINER POINTS ON RATTAN SELECTION
TEXT GENE KHOR



WHAT'S A BASIC STEP TO TAKE WHEN BUYING RATTAN FURNITURE?

Have a look underneath at the general finishing – this will give you a good idea of the general level of workmanship. Untidy weave and bare metal means corners have been cut to save costs. And see if the frame is visible – it should be powder-coated aluminium; shiny and hard to scratch. Also, look at the welding joints – are they clean or messy? All these little details will reveal the general level of workmanship, and the overall quality of the product.



WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE'S QUITE A BIT OF SCIENCE BEHIND SYNTHETIC RATTAN AS WELL.

To start, synthetic rattan is produced from polyethylene – a by-product of oil. Additives such as UV stabiliser, impact modifiers, and antioxidants are the key to lasting performance. Slight variations to them can have a major impact on the products' longevity.

HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT WOULD THESE 'SLIGHT VARIATIONS' MAKE?

It's essentially a polymer, and without the correct additives, the fibre is likely to become brittle, split, and crack or fade down the road. Whilst the furniture may look fine when you buy it, problems will develop later on, especially around corners where the fibre is stressed. International brand names have reputable fibres, with teams of chemists constantly testing and developing them.



SOUNDS LIKE THERE'S A LOT MORE TO IT THAN WE KNOW.

Rattan furniture is all handmade, and weaving even a simple chair can take anything from one to several days. Standards of weaving differ from country to country – I've found the best in Asia to be in the Philippines. They have a weaving culture developed over generations, and with two top brands – DEDON and Rausch Classics – manufactured there, more advanced and tidier weave finishing techniques have been developed and taught.

WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO GAUGE THE QUALITY OF THE WEAVING AND FINISHING?

See if you can split the weave with your fingers – the tighter the weave, the better. A slack and loose weave looks terrible and generally leads to problems later on. And is the general finishing of

the weave – especially around corners and edges – tidy and neat? If you can see the frame underneath, it's not a quality weave.

Staples are used to secure the fibre onto the frame. The magic of good weaving cleverly hides them underneath other fibres so that you can't see them. Also, check the quality of the fittings, like the feet gliders. Is the weave tidy and secure around there? Legs are generally the hardest areas to finish cleanly and securely.

ANY LAST BIT OF ADVICE?

If no warranty is offered, then I don't recommend that you buy it. While it may look okay now, issues with fibre and weaving quality in the near future may arise. Consider the reputation of the retailer and the after sales service. Any reputable retailer should have no reason to not give a warranty on the products they sell.