SPINNING IN THE HIMALAYAS—Plying with a pole! Really!

Spin·off

it's about making yarn by hand

Drumcarding Basics p. 30

Great Spinning Wheel Roundup

All you need to know right here page 41

Indulge in little luxuries

silk, alpaca, pygora, and more

The Tao of Washing Wool

Handspun Baby Surprise Jackets—

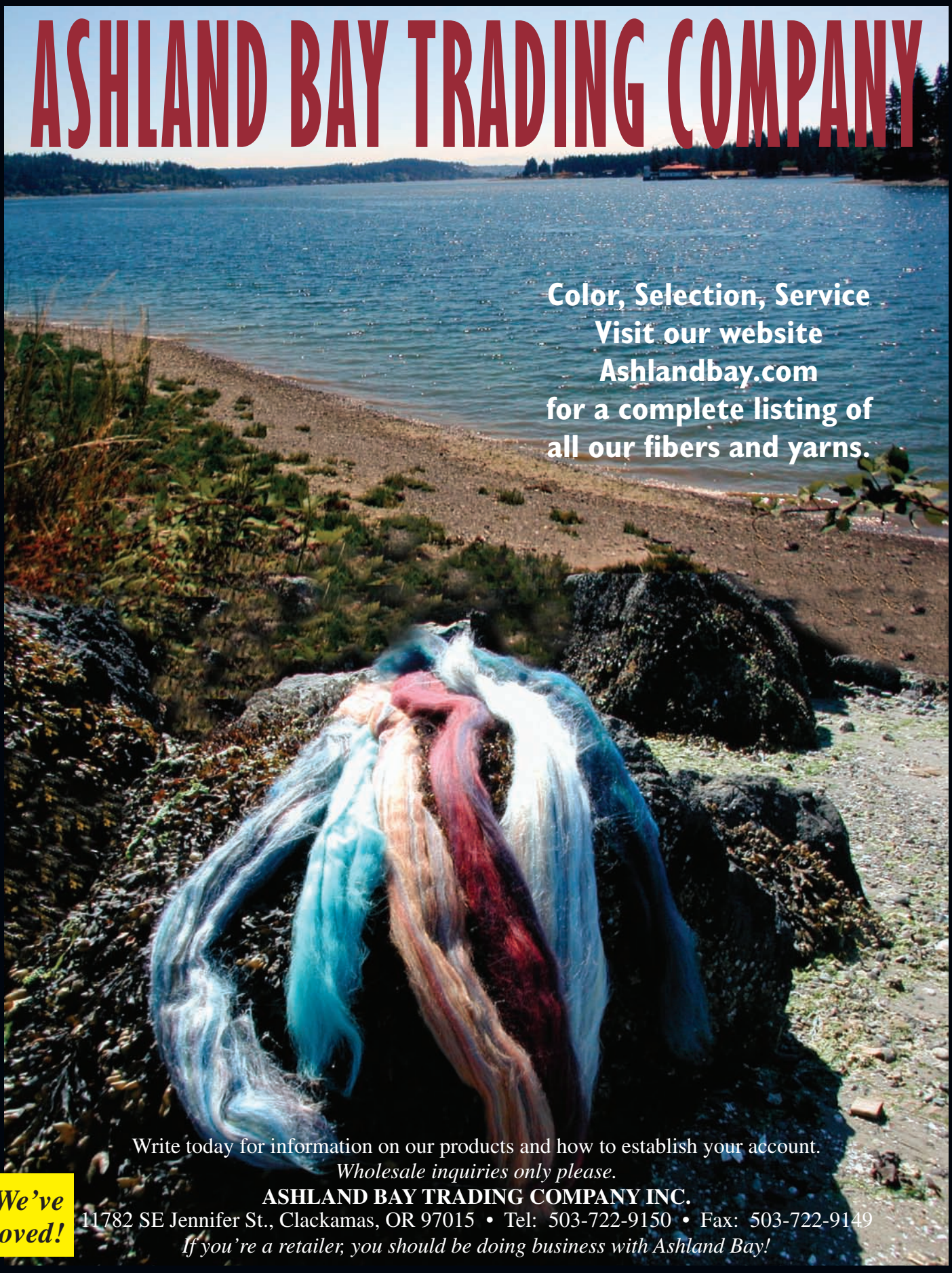
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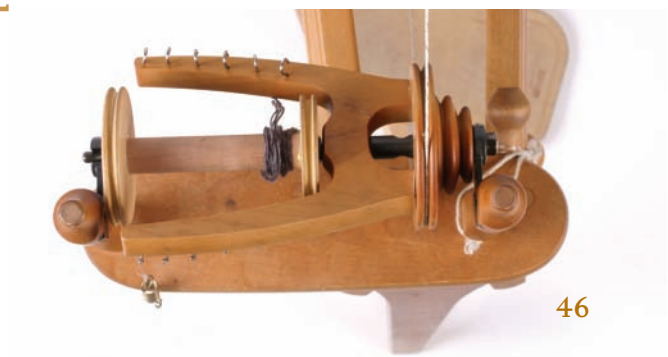
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Spin·off
it's about making yarn by hand

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Number 3
Fall 2008



A couple of months ago at my daughter's third birthday party, Jackie, the mother of one of Hannah's friends from day care, asked me what I do for work. I told her that I am an editor. She asked what I edit, and I replied with my standard, "A magazine about spinning" and explained further, "It's about making yarn by hand," to avoid confusion with the spinning associated with exercise bicycles. In most cases, when people ask me what I do, the thread of conversation stops at this point, and we go on to other topics. But this time, Jackie said, "Oh! No way! I've always wanted to learn how to spin!" I stopped dead in my tracks. I briefly considered uncovering the bins of fiber, spindles, and yarn that had been neatly tucked away to make way for the rampaging three-year-olds but then came back to reality—besides, I didn't want to scare away this potential spinning buddy with over-eager enthusiasm bordering on fanaticism. Calmly, I said, "I'd love to teach you how to spin—why don't you and Gina come over for a playdate/spinning lesson soon?"



Corriedale fiber—scoured and drumcarded—ready to spin.

So a couple of weeks later, while our daughters ran around the backyard chasing butterflies (seriously), Jackie made her first yarns on a CD spindle with newly washed Corriedale fiber that I had scoured the day before (see page 64) and prepared in big fluffy batts using the fur drum on my Patrick Green drumcarder (see page 30). Hannah and Gina helped us drumcard another batt—carefully supervised, of course. They also had spindles and a bit of fluff to play with, but in the end the swing set was more captivating for them. Jackie drafted while I kept the spindle spinning—it didn't take her long to catch on to the process. She had a natural feeling for how the fiber should draft apart and the twist should enter the drafted fibers. Before we knew it, it was nap time (for the girls), and Jackie had a length of beautifully bumpy, cohesive yarn on her spindle. Armed with a bunch of carded wool and the CD spindles to practice on at home, Jackie and Gina left, and Hannah and I were a bit wistful in the absence of our new buddies.

Jackie reports that she's getting the hang of spinning and that Gina likes helping her make yarn. While at our home, Hannah has been turning everything into "her knitting needles," occasionally wants to treadle, and has requested several articles of clothing for her animals (all named Lucy, by the way), and I am dreaming of a Polwarth fleece (see page 62) and trying to figure out if I mostly spin semiworsted or semiwoolen yarn (page 27). We're looking forward to another spinning playdate.

Happy spinning!

Amy

Amy Clarke Moore, Editor
aclarkemoore@interweave.com

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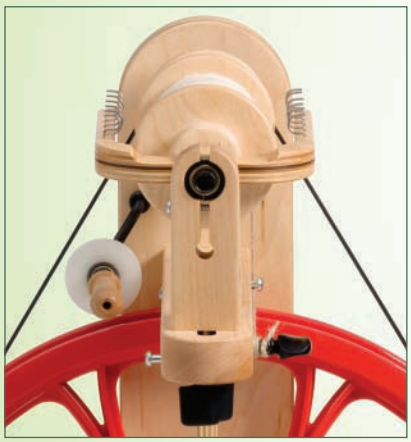
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Tour de Fleece

During the hottest part of the summer, many spinners challenged themselves to spin every day the Tour de France was in competition. In its third year, the Tour de Fleece attracts novice to expert spinners who set goals and challenge themselves—and the number of contestants has grown exponentially—from 16 in 2006 to 500 in 2008. Some of the contestants are avid cyclists who love watching the Tour de France, while others love the excuse to spin.

Watching the participants challenge themselves and then blog about it was invigorating and inspiring. Take a look at the Tour de Fleece photos on Flickr.com (search under groups for the Tour de Fleece), or you can follow the progress of many participants on their blogs (the challenge originated here, http://keeponknittinginthefreeworld.blogspot.com/2008/06/tour-de-fleece-2008.html) and via online groups such as Ravelry or Yahoo! Groups.

The yardage that came out of this month of spinning is astounding. What I want to know is did anyone attempt to count it? And where is it all going? I say, "Let's start training for next year's event now!"

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Summer Love

I really enjoyed the article by Joanne Seiff in the Summer 2008 issue of *Spin·Off* ("Armchair Traveler: Kentucky and Tennessee," page 24). As a wool enthusiast, spinner, and weaver (second only to my enthusiasm for travel and photography), I would love to read more articles that show me neat places to visit like the ones in the article.



I just finished reading "At Stonehedge Fiber Mill" (Behind the Scenes, page 28). I just had some Bluefaced Leicester/French Angora yarn processed by them in June. They did a wonderful job with a week turnaround time. I also purchased two skeins of Shepherd's Wool to weave a shawl. The yarn is lovely and resulted in a very versatile, soft, and lacy shawl.

Annette Boose
Westerville, Ohio

I wish Rudy Amann's article about choosing your first wheel ("How to Choose Your First Wheel," Summer 2008, page 40) had appeared five years ago when I purchased my first wheel. I researched wheels online, through magazines, and in stores before I finally chose my wheel. I called my local wheel dealer to see if the model I wanted was in stock and then drove there to make my purchase. The shop owner asked if I wanted to try any wheels before I bought one, but I declined. I didn't want to tell her that I didn't know how to spin yet. With my purchased wheel unassembled, I came home with it to put it together and then taught myself to spin. I don't recommend to anyone going about it in this manner!

However, Mr. Amann left out one very key point in selecting a wheel: price. This simple, finely crafted machine is expensive, and most of us must be careful when spending hundreds of dollars on a "hobby item." My final wheel decision was based upon how much money I wanted to spend rather than any other factor. I'm sure that most people make their spending decisions on every kind of item based upon price first, then upon features.

I enjoy each issue of *Spin·Off* and look forward to many more great articles on all of the aspects of creating and using handspun yarn.

Carol Soaper
Marshall, Virginia

Editor's note: *We're very excited to present "The Great Spinning Wheel Roundup" on page 41, which features full specifications, including price, on a wide range of spinning wheels.*

"Your Yarn" Quandary

What has happened to the Your Yarn department? A friend commented to me at our Queensland Spinners, Weavers and Fibre Artists meeting that she'd seen my contribution of a wool/Samoyed blend in an old issue. When you moved this feature to online-only it was little use to me because I didn't have easy access to the Internet. Now I have my own computer and Internet access, but I've looked in your latest Web posting and don't see Your Yarn.

Joan Apthorp
Brisbane, Australia

Editor's Note: *Your Yarn is featured twice a year, and is included both in the magazine and on our website, spinoffmagazine.com. Look for Your Yarn in print and on the web with the Spring and Fall issues of* Spin·Off.

Web Whiplash

I have seen two letters to the editor explaining how upset people are that parts of *Spin·Off* are now online. I would like to say that I think it is great that *Spin·Off* is helping to reduce cost and reduce waste by not printing these items and putting them online. It gives me something to read during my breaks at work, and I am also able to read Spinner's Connection on my Windows mobile device. Now I do not need to carry my *Spin·Off* with me to read—I just need my cell phone, and I can read it whenever I want to. This is a great step toward using technology to help reduce waste. Thank you very much to the *Spin·Off* staff.

Kris
Lynnwood, Washington

—continued on page 11

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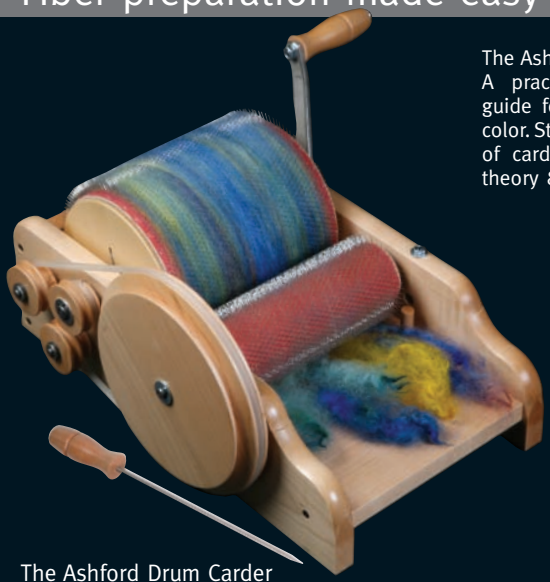
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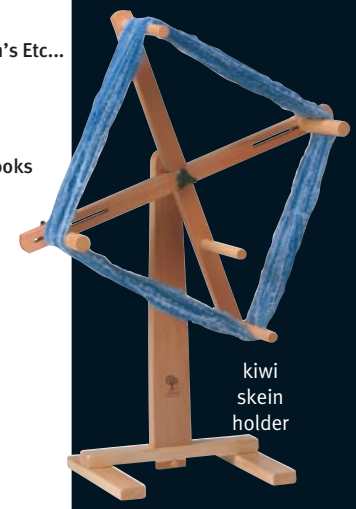
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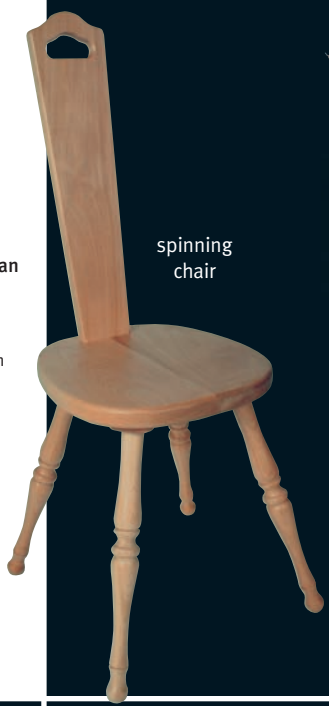

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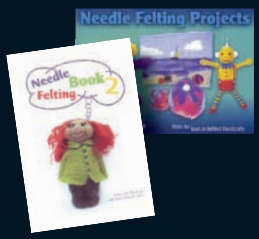


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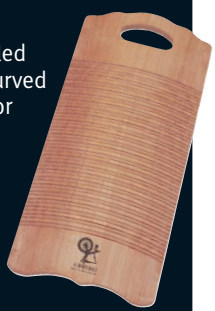
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 (continued from page 6)



IN MEMORIAM
Ruth Schooley / Twisted Spinster
1954–2008

Each reverently chose a few of her cotton punis. Mike set up the SpinTech he had gifted Ruth, while spinners gathered waiting to spin. This could have been any spin-in, but it wasn't. The spinners had just said farewell to Ruth Schooley, TwistedSpinster, who died suddenly on July 15, 2008.

The fiberists gathered that day represented the hundreds nationally and internationally whose lives were touched by this vibrant fiber artist. "When an elder dies, a library burns to the ground" was a phrase we heard at SOAR 2007. The great library of Ruth, an incredible repository of knowledge and generosity, has burned.

To many, she was the Queen of cotton for her expertise with that fiber—from cultivation, processing, and spinning, to Oaxacan weaving. She taught many a frustrated spinner the magic of cotton, and how to befriend it. Ruth was a dye-pot goddess and a mad scientist—experimenting with color, growing plants, and hosting dye days, accompanied often by her "Roketman," the love of her life, Mike. Ruth was also a phenomenal spinner with that rare gift of a perfectly balanced long draw.

Ruth had a contagious passion for fiber. She was knowledgeable, generous, and downright fun. She often said, "This is my brain on fiber." Ruth was also a fiber enabler, connecting us to varied and amazing fiber folk; bringing us to classes everywhere, even other countries, to learn and connect with our global fiber community. Ruth had strength in adversity, composure in the face of tragedy, and genuine optimism. She was always kind, yet she could get a wicked twinkle in her eye when she had some scheme going. And no one could resist her incredible joie de vivre. Ruth was beloved in her home guilds and a vital participant of numerous online fiber communities. She was one of the first to say, "Wave your dpns," providing support, thoughts, prayers, and community across the wide world to fiber folk.

Please wave your dpns in honor of Ruth Schooley; her impact on fiber folk was profound and worldwide. Ruth's Roketman sent her off holding the socks she was knitting the day she died, joking that she would probably find a way to finish them. We will miss you Ruth. We know you are out there spinning the clouds.

Ercil Howard-Wroth Cecilia Julagay Janel Laidman Ruth Northrup

And our survey says . . .

Every spinner has a different approach to planning and completing projects. What goals do you set for yourself when starting a new yarn, and what is your end result?

- *I envision a specific yarn in my head, and I am usually successful in reproducing it on the wheel.*
- *I envision a specific yarn in my head, but I am still practicing to be able to reproduce it on the wheel.*
- *I like to try new techniques and will practice nonstop until I feel comfortable with them.*
- *I like to try new techniques, but I'm not worried about mastering them.*
- *I tend to stick with the type of yarn I'm good at making, and I'm content that way.*
- *I tend to stick with the type of yarn I'm good at making, but I'd like to try new things.*

Visit our website at spinoffmagazine.com and give us your answers.

In the Summer 2008 issue, we asked who you make handspun projects for. Here are the results. (Note that the total percentage is much higher than 100% since we asked for your top three choices.)

78% *Myself. My handspun is too special to share with those who won't appreciate it!*

18% *Babies. Tiny baby objects are the perfect quick project.*

7% *My pets. Because animals deserve quality craftsmanship, too!*

61% *My significant other/children. The beautiful items help them forgive my fiber addiction.*

65% *General gift-giving. Whatever the occasion, I'd much rather give a handspun gift.*

6% *Charity. Because spinning can make the world a better place.*

64% *Nobody in particular. I make things with no purpose in mind and they eventually find the right home.*

To send us your input on surveys or other topics, go to interweave.com/spin/comments.asp.

BY STEFANIE BERGANINI


A sheep enjoys the scenic Welsh countryside. ALASDAIR THOMSON

AN UNCONVENTIONAL PET

The BBC News published a story about a large ram living in a suburban neighborhood outside Cardiff, Wales. David Palmer and his family were on a trip to the Goldcliff Nature Reserve when they happened upon a lonely stray lamb, and with no other sheep in sight, they decided to take him home. Despite attempts to reintroduce him to farm life, the lamb, now grown into a 300-pound ram named Nick Boing, prefers living at home with the Palmer family. He spends most of the day in the backyard, but every evening Nick comes into the house, cozies up to the couch, and watches television with his family. He also likes to visit classes at local schools and has gotten a job as the mascot of David's son's rugby team. To keep his fleece in check, Nick gets sheared once every year. David says, "He loves being shampooed and will lie on his back with his legs in the air for me to wash him." As for the house, "It probably smells in here, but I'm used to it," says David. **The complete story can be found at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/south_east/7504433.stm.**

CYBER INSIDER

If you'd like to give back to the community with your spinning, **Idealist** might be the place to go to learn how. Started in 1995 by the nonprofit group Actions Without Borders, www.idealist.org features a huge database of charitable organizations, volunteer opportunities, events, and more covering a myriad of topics. With almost 150,000 members sharing tens of thousands of opportunities to get involved, you're sure to find a way to add some altruism to your wheel.

Flickr is a great place to share photos of your handspun yarn or find inspiration for your next spinning project. A basic account at www.flickr.com is free, and users can upload up to 100 MB of photos per month. The site has a great "groups" feature allowing those with similar interests to share their photos—a search for "handspun" reveals over 250 groups, the largest of which has almost 400 members and over 4,000 luscious yarn photos.

If you'd like to share your handspun with others and receive something in return, **Swap-Bot** is a must-visit. Users at www.swap-bot.com can join and create "swaps," or themed trading events, to exchange mix tapes, recipes, and, of course, yarn. Each swapper assembles a package of goodies to send to a partner and then receives a package of his or her own. With options for either national or international swaps, the world of yarn is only as far away as your mailbox.

EXPANSION OPENING CANCELED

The Board of Trustees of Washington, D.C.'s, Textile Museum has voted to forego the museum's planned 23,400-square-foot expansion. "While the Penn Quarter expansion presented an exciting opportunity for The Textile Museum, unforeseen costs have resulted in a project budget the Board and management believe to be unsustainable, particularly for a building the Museum would not own," said Bruce P. Baganz, president of the Museum's Board of Trustees. Operations will continue at the original location at 2320 S Street, NW, and the museum plans to increase outreach to better engage national and international audiences. **For more information, visit www.textilemuseum.org/expansion.htm.**





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Intertwined: The Art of Handspun Yarn, Modern Patterns, and Creative Spinning

by Lexi Boeger

Lexi Boeger starts this fun, funky book discussing her point of view on a "balanced" yarn. She jumps in feet first with her premise that "No hand created yarn is good or bad per se; it just is what it is." This book is a romp through a world of no rules, as illustrated on her Pluckyfluff website. No material is off-limits to her wheel—cassette tape, shredded paper, silk cocoons, lace, recycled fabric, buttons and beads, a chenille bedspread, plus all of the usual fibers—if she can make it stay in a yarn she will. In this book, she and several contributing spinners have taken traditional novelty yarn techniques to the extreme, most often with outrageous additions, twist, size, and color combos. A number of sections are adapted from her first book, *Handspun Revolution* (Pluckyfluff, 2005).

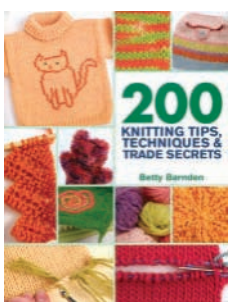
Early on Boeger gives us her position on art versus craft. She clearly sees her work falling on the art side but is confident that tension between the two schools of thought are necessary to keep any craft alive, open, and balanced. She also believes that her yarns require intermediate to advanced spinning techniques best learned after sound, smooth handspinning is mastered. Boeger includes some of her creative journeys as she takes ideas from thoughts to finished items in the journal section.

Various novelty techniques are taught in a straightforward fashion, with clear, simple illustrations explaining the extra preparation, slow rejoining, securing of various objects in the yarn, and getting those through or around the orifice. Fortunately, she has several tips for dealing with super-thick yarns. The good news is that you often don't need a great deal of yardage for the projects. Using her method of breaking off, attaching the next object, and then rejoining before continuing will completely remove any fears of joining. My personal favorite yarns are the Silk Cocoon and the Translucent Mohair.

The close-up photos of yarns and accessories are clearly aimed at the young and the young at heart, with a *Project Runway* type of urgency. This book is a helpful guide for all who want to spin the popular novelty or character yarns.

— Patsy Zawistoski

Beverly, Massachusetts: Quarry Books, 2008. Hardbound, 304 pages, $29.99. ISBN 978-1-592-53374-9. www.quarrybooks.com.



200 Knitting Tips, Techniques & Trade Secrets: An Indispensable Reference of Technical Know-How and Troubleshooting Tips

by Betty Barnden

Many new knitters long to have an expert sitting beside them. If one must rely on books, here's a superb "expert" to have by your side. Full of color demonstration photographs, explanations, and detail, *200 Knitting Tips, Techniques, & Trade Secrets* offers lots of useful hints to get any knitter through a buttonhole or a first attempt at dyeing, or even about how to select flattering styles and colors. Experienced knitters will appreciate the design tips for entrelac and edgings, as well as math formulas offered for creating sweater sleeves that fit or creating "collar stands"—that is, short-row collar techniques. Information on creating darts and hints for beading and sequins, inserting zippers, and assembling garments are all a big help to knitters who need a bit of support when attempting something unfamiliar.

While no one could master this technical information in a single sitting, this book is a useful reference for any spinner who knits. It is a practical guide if you know what you're trying to accomplish or need to brush up on a specific technique. Convenient charts offer information on needle sizes, abbreviations, and even some interesting stitches with which to experiment.

This book's strengths are also its weaknesses. While some will love the feeling of the strict "knitting grandmother" beside us on the couch to explain what must be done next and how, others will disagree with the rigidity of some of the advice. Spinners are often more experimental as knitters, and some of the hints here will seem overly dictatorial for the experimental. (For instance, not all matching I-cords must be done on needles two sizes smaller than what's called for in the pattern.) If your tendency is to "unvent" as Elizabeth Zimmermann advises, you'll need to take some of the tips with a grain of salt. Further, there are several photos of sweaters that I'd love to spin and knit myself. I wish there were more than tips on these designs—this book has no specific garment patterns. Those issues aside, Betty Barnden's efforts are a valuable resource for the knitting community.

— Joanne Seiff

New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008. Hardbound, 160 pages, $27.95. ISBN 978-0-312-37373-3. http://us.macmillan.com.

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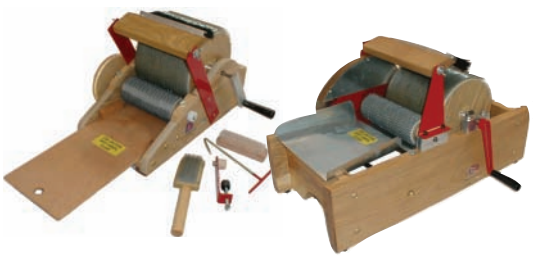


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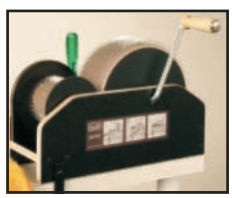




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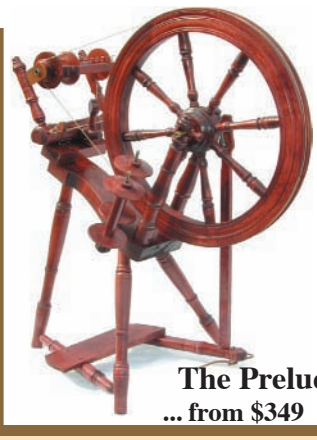
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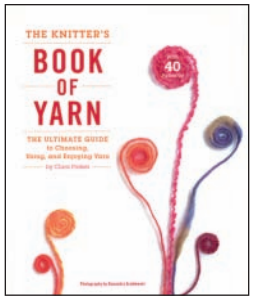
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 (continued from page 14)



The Knitter's Book of Yarn: The Ultimate Guide to Choosing, Using, and Enjoying Yarn

by Clara Parkes

Love of yarn is a common thread among knitters. A trip to the local yarn shop can put us on temporary sensory overload. We choose a yarn, maybe not with a project in mind, but because we simply fall in love with it.

In fact, the handspinner can and does succumb to fiber love. We spin up yarn with no concern for end use because the spinning process is simply delicious.

Clearly, we need help. *The Knitter's Book of Yarn* has suggestions, solutions, and buying information in an attractive 255-page format. Thirty-six projects are organized by yarn structure: singles, two-ply, three-ply, four-ply, and more. This is a unique approach. Clara presents projects from fifteen well-known designers: Cat Bordhi, Jackie Erickson-Schweitzer, Norah Gaughan, and Lana Hames, to name just a few.

Fresh and fun projects include a cotton octopus catnip toy, a linen basket liner, an inspired calla lily felted bag nestled amongst socks, mitts, hats, scarves, and shawls. These may suggest standard fare, but the design work and details are intriguing. All projects were written both for a specific designer yarn and a substitute general yarn. Handspinners can interpret yarn requirements, run samples, and spin their own yarn. Clara uses super-chunky, worsted-weight, DK, sportweight, fingering-weight, and laceweight yarns.

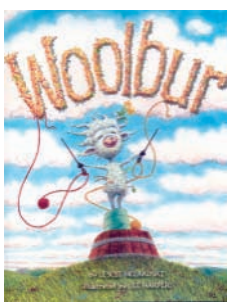
Included is a section on small-scale yarn producers/mills. And there is mention of fiber festivals.

Yarn design elements are presented in an organized manner and comprise about one-fourth of the text. From a beginner's point of view, some statements are troublesome. For example, in the glossary there is a definition of neps as "small tangled or matted clumps of fibers that are removed during the carding process." Would that it were so! Carding can cause neps. Even though the accomplished, experienced handspinner may find material to dispute, the novice will remain charmed by Clara's infectious enthusiasm.

For the projects alone, the book is worthy of close attention. Grab a copy and then just try not to reach for that yarn and your knitting needles.

— Stephenie Gaustad

New York: Potter Craft, 2007. Hardbound, 256 pages, $30. ISBN 978-0-307-35216-3. www.pottercraft.com.



Woolbur

by Leslie Helakoski, illustrated by Lee Harper

A lovely book for children, *Woolbur* is the story of a very unconventional sheep. Rather than stand still with the sheep, he runs with the dogs. Rather than being shorn, he wants his wool to grow. Rather than carding fleece, he cards his own wool while he's still wearing it. At every turn, his parents try to explain that sheep don't behave this way—it's too different. Woolbur replies, "I know, isn't it great?" Grandpaa, a bit of a nonconformist himself, tells Maa and Paa not to worry. Ultimately Woolbur finds a way to follow the flock by employing some of his creative ideas.

In telling this tale, Helakoski also includes information about where wool comes from and how it's processed, spun into yarn, and woven. This is backed up by the charming illustrations created by Harper. A spinner reading to a child

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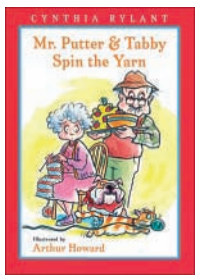
 (continued from page 17)

might use the opportunity to elaborate on skills and tools involved, and since all the spinners I know march to the beat of a different drummer, celebrate our uniqueness at the same time.

—*Allison Judge*

New York: HarperCollins, 2008. Hardbound, 32 pages, $16.99. ISBN 978-0-060-84726-5. www.harpercollins.com.

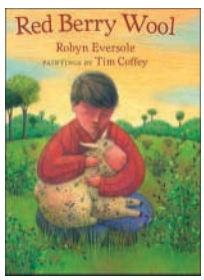
These other children's books are great for sharing with the younger generation—or the young at heart.



Mr. Putter and Tabby Spin the Yarn

by Cynthia Rylant
illustrated by Arthur Howard

New York: Harcourt Paperbacks, 2007. Paperbound, 44 pages, $5.95. ISBN 978-0-152-06095-4.



Red Berry Wool

by Robyn Eversole
illustrated by Tim Coffey

Morton Grove, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company, 2002. Paperbound, 32 pages, $6.95. ISBN 978-0-807-56918-4.



One Little Lamb

by Elaine Greenstein
illustrated by Elaine Greenstein

New York: Viking Juvenile, 2004. Hardbound, 32 pages, $10.99. ISNB 978-0-670-03683-7.



Sophie's Masterpiece: A Spider's Tale

by Eileen Spinelli
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New York: Aladdin, 2004. Paperback, 32 pages, $6.99. ISBN 978-0-689-86680-7.

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The **Roberta** scissor line from Fiskars is part of the company's 2008 Gingher Designer's Series. With a decorative, brightly colored handle, the Roberta comes in many different styles for a variety of cutting needs. The limited edition design has been available since August 15.

Fiskars Brands Inc., 2537 Daniels St., Madison, WI 53718. (866) 348-5661; socconsumeraffairs@fiskars.com; www.fiskars.com.

Babe's new **Spinnrock** production wheel is made with square PVC pipe and an NW flyer. The double-treadled Spinnrock has a 21¼-inch drive wheel and its bobbin-lead system achieves a 5.875:1 spinning ratio. The wheel weighs 8.6 pounds and comes with two regular bobbins and one plying bobbin, a lazy kate, ¼ pound of roving, and an orifice hook.



Babe's Fiber Garden, W8131 Bay View Dr., Whitewater, WI 53190. (262) 473-2009; inventor@babesfibergarden.com; www.babesfibergarden.com.

The **Colors Collection** from Earthues is the perfect kit if you'd like to start natural dyeing. The kit, which arrives in a sturdy cardboard box for easy storage, contains mordants, ten different dye extracts, and all other additives and supplies needed to start dyeing. Also included is a fifty-page booklet with very thorough instructions, color swatches, plant information, and more.

Earthues, 5129 Ballard Ave. NW, Seattle, WA 98107. (206) 789-1065; info@earthues.com; www.earthues.com.



Leslie Wind's **Cable Needle Necklace** does double duty as both a knitting tool and a beautiful piece of jewelry. The curved end of the necklace pendant functions as a cable needle, keeping those pesky cables firmly under control while knitting. The tapered metal end can also be used to hold stitch markers, a row counter, or other small knitting notions firmly within reach. The pendants are made from silver, bronze, or gold, and custom orders are available.



Leslie Wind, 338 Granite St., Box 2327, Rockport, MA 01966. (978) 546-6539; wind@cove.com; www.lesliewind.com; http://darcyknottyknitter.blogspot.com.

Louet's **Julia** wheel is the second in its line to use scotch tension. The wheel uses the same flyer and bobbins as Louet's smaller Victoria model, but the Julia features a 20-inch drive wheel and weighs in at 11 pounds. A double treadle setup is standard, and the wheel spins at ratios of 6, 8.5, 12.5, and 19:1.



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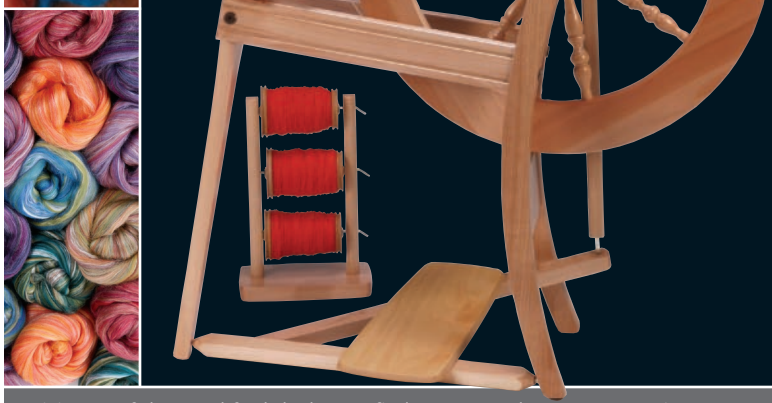
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James Watson and Lucy sit next to a Marie wheel.

PHOTO BY PATRICIA WATSON

At Watson Wheels

BY CINDY HILL

With the careful attention to quality that is the hallmark of an engineer trained before the advent of computer-run manufacturing lines, every part of every Watson wheel other than bearings and screws is made by James Watson in his Vancouver Island workshop, or by his son, Andrew Watson, at his home shop in Burlington, Ontario. Producing six different Norwegian and Canadian wheel models in cherry, walnut, or custom-ordered woods and in a variety of different trim configurations, Watson Wheels answers the question many spinners ask about their own handwork: "How can we make this better?"

Born in England and schooled during the blitz of World War II, James and his wife, Patricia, moved to Canada in 1958 with their two oldest daughters. Settling originally in Ontario, they soon added Andrew and another daughter to the family. Through a career in professional engineering that spanned four continents, James witnessed the evolution of a wide variety of manufacturing industries—from the handwork of skilled craftsmen to the digitally controlled robotic factory line.

After retiring from decades of making things primarily composed of metal, James started working with wood, building cabins and then replicating antique furniture. "Making things in wood is a complete change of pace but has its own challenges," James says. "Wood moves with humidity. It looks different on each side. Every piece is different, even from the same tree."

Then he stumbled onto the spinning wheel, the ultimate engineer's dream: a machine made wholly of wood, combining ancient design with modern applications and, like all machines, ripe for improvement. James' first spinning wheel was built in 1994 for a "gentleman spinner" who apparently shared James' engineering enthusiasm: "He wanted every possible accessory including weights to calibrate the draw resistance," James recalls.

After many hours of talking to spinners as well as researching what was already available in the market, he went into production the following year, and the business has grown slowly and steadily since, aided by advertising, appearances at fiber shows, and word of mouth from dedicated customers.

James and Patricia moved from Ontario to Vancouver Island in 1996 and took with them a container of cherry wood from their Ontario property, some of which is still being used for wheels. Now settled off the far west coast of Canada, looking out across the sea to Washington, James turns out ornate spinning wheels that combine the beauty of antique furniture with modern ergonomic innovations, some of which depart somewhat radically from standard commercial spinning wheel design. But these departures are not mere marketing gimmicks; instead they fall firmly into the category of "Why didn't anyone think of this before?"

"As a nonspinner, I was interested in existing designs and how they were used," James says. "I noticed that many spinners were sitting sideways in order to draw properly. Some of the treadles were too small, and many had to treadle faster than was comfortable in order to keep the wheel moving uniformly. I designed heavy wheels with plenty of inertia and large double treadles so that they could be run smoothly, either fast or slow. I used a larger than normal bobbin. I made the wheel easily removable for transport."

Pointing out that most spinners draw with the left hand and therefore twist their backs when using a conventional left-hand-side flyer, James began designing wheels with the flyer on the right-hand side.

"Historically the flyer was placed on the left because on walking wheels the spindle was on the left, but the spinner was standing sideways," James says. "How could the design be wrong for such a long time?" His double treadles and right-hand flyer placements were uncommon when Watson Wheels started, but now they are extremely popular, both in Watson Wheel models and in the lines of other wheel manufacturers.

James now produces about fifteen wheels a year, though realizing that he could soon be slowing down a bit, he has transferred some of the parts production and an increasing proportion of wheel production to his son, Andrew. "He has been working with me since childhood but making wheel parts for about two years. He got started because we both wanted Watson Wheels to continue after I got too old to keep up, knowing that supply rather than demand was the limiting factor."

Andrew and his wife, Judy-Anne, are already attending fiber shows and demonstrating Watson Wheels to the spinning community. Judy-Anne is in charge of spinning demonstrations at shows: "I am better at pointing out mistakes than spinning as I damaged my fingertips and lost much of the feeling," James says. His wife, Patricia, does spin a little but prefers knitting and sewing, although she provides considerable support when James takes to the road for fiber shows.

Andrew's increased assistance means that Watson Wheels will continue to be made in reasonable quantities at the same high quality, and James will have more time to work on some design ideas to find the elusive "better way."

One new product on the horizon is a spinning chair in the form of a traditional Windsor but with wood and turnings to match the wheels. The present product line also includes large combs, drop spindles, a 48" walking wheel, and niddy-noddies. "I believe that a well-made wheel can incorporate new features and still look traditional," James explains. "I am probably most proud of the ergonomics of my wheels and the quality of the wood used so that they can be displayed as well as used."

James uses a workshop at his home of only about 400 square feet plus about 750 square feet of storage space. But he has even innovatively improved the efficiency of his workspace: all his major equipment pieces are mounted on wheeled bases, allowing them to be moved out of the way with ease. His six different wheel models are standard, but with many customizations available to suit any individual client's needs. James also offers repairs and modifications to other manufacturers' wheels.

"Watson Wheels believes that the prime objective of making a wheel has to be client satisfaction," James says. "I believe we achieve that and will continue to do so." ⌘

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Cindy Hill is a writer, spinner, knitter, and gardener living in Middlebury, Vermont. She shares a cottage at the foot of the Green Mountains with her drop-spindling husband, Chris, daughter, Evelyn, and a myriad of furred, feathered, and finned creatures.


PHOTO BY PATRICIA WATSON

The Watson Wheels workshop makes very efficient use of space.


PHOTO BY JUDY-ANNE WATSON

Andrew works on a partially completed Martha wheel.



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Worsted, woolen, or semi-something

BY RUDY AMANN



Do you spin worsted or woolen yarn? Don't worry if you don't know—many spinners do not know what type of yarn they spin. They just continue spinning the same way they did for their first successful skein of yarn.

The difference between worsted and woolen yarns comes from how the fibers are prepared for spinning, the drafting technique that is used, and how twist is allowed to enter the fibers. There is general agreement among spinners about how to spin true worsted yarns and true woolen yarns. However, most of us spin something between those two types of yarn.

Most authors of spinning articles and workshop mentors generally agree that true worsted yarn is spun from fibers 3 inches or longer, handcombed with English-style combs to remove shorter fibers, with the remaining long fibers in a parallel arrangement, using short draw, with the orifice (or spinning) hand leading the twist into the drafted fibers.

There is also general agreement that true woolen yarn is spun from a rolag made with handcards, with the short and long fibers (usually all less than 3 inches long) in a random arrangement, using long draw, and allowing the twist to enter the fibers unrestricted.

However, there is not general agreement about what to call the many yarns we spin that are not true worsted or woolen yarns. Some authorities call everything else semiworsted. I prefer the terminology that Anne Field presents in her book *Spinning Wool: Beyond the Basics*. Depending on the spinning technique used and how the fibers are prepared, yarns fall into four categories: worsted, semiworsted, woolen, or semiwoolen. In categorizing yarns, the spinning style takes precedence over the type of fiber preparation.

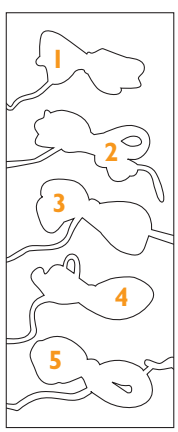
Worsted yarn is spun by pinching the drafted fibers and leading the twist into them, using fibers prepared in a parallel arrangement. Worsted yarn is smooth, lustrous, hardwearing, and has good stitch definition for patterned knitting.

Semiworsted yarn is spun worsted-style, using fibers prepared in a random arrangement. Patterned knitting will not be as distinct as with worsted yarn.

Woolen yarn is spun allowing the twist to enter the drafted fibers, using fibers prepared in a random arrangement. Woolen yarn is fluffy, soft, and light. Knitted garments will be warm from the air trapped in the yarn, but patterns do not show up as clearly.

Semiwoolen yarn is spun woolen-style, using fibers prepared in a parallel arrangement. Because the yarn is smoother than woolen yarn, it will be less itchy when worn next to the skin, provided the fibers are not too coarse for comfort. ⌘

Rudy Amann of Brunswick, Maine, is a retired high school mathematics teacher and assistant principal. When he was learning to spin, Priscilla Gibson-Roberts was his mentor. He teaches and demonstrates spinning and nålbinding.



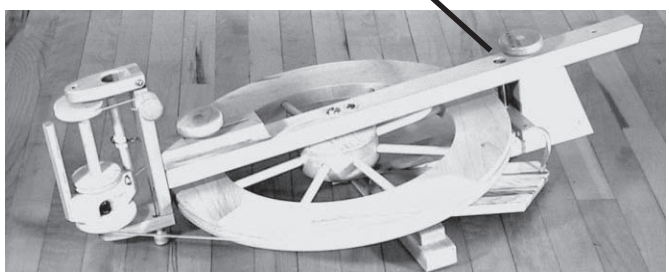
1. Bluefaced Leicester top, short forward draw (worsted-style). Parallel fibers + worsted spinning = worsted yarn. **2.** Bluefaced Leicester top, short forward draw (woolen-style). Parallel fibers + woolen spinning = semiwoolen yarn. **3.** Coopworth carded roving, drafted using short forward draw (worsted-style). Random fibers + worsted spinning = semiworsted yarn. **4.** Coopworth carded roving drafted using short forward draw (woolen-style). Random fibers + woolen spinning = woolen yarn. **5.** Coopworth carded roving, drafting against the twist—medium draw (woolen-style). Random fibers + woolen spinning = woolen yarn.

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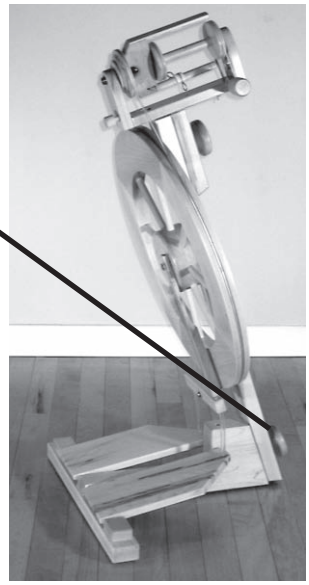
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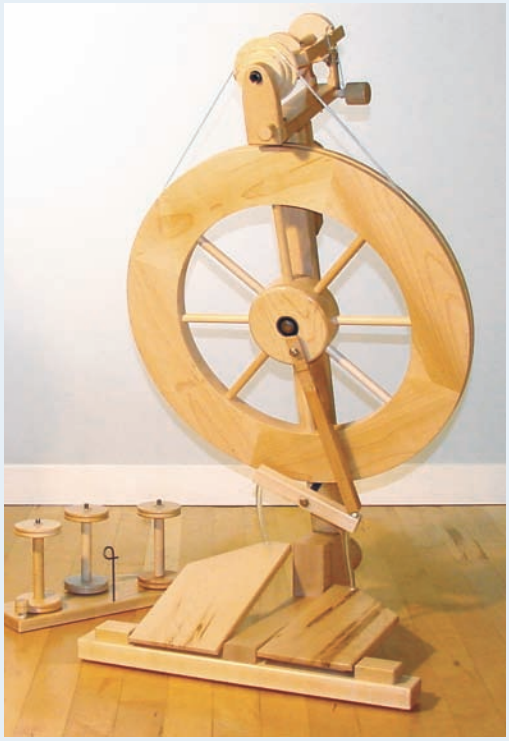
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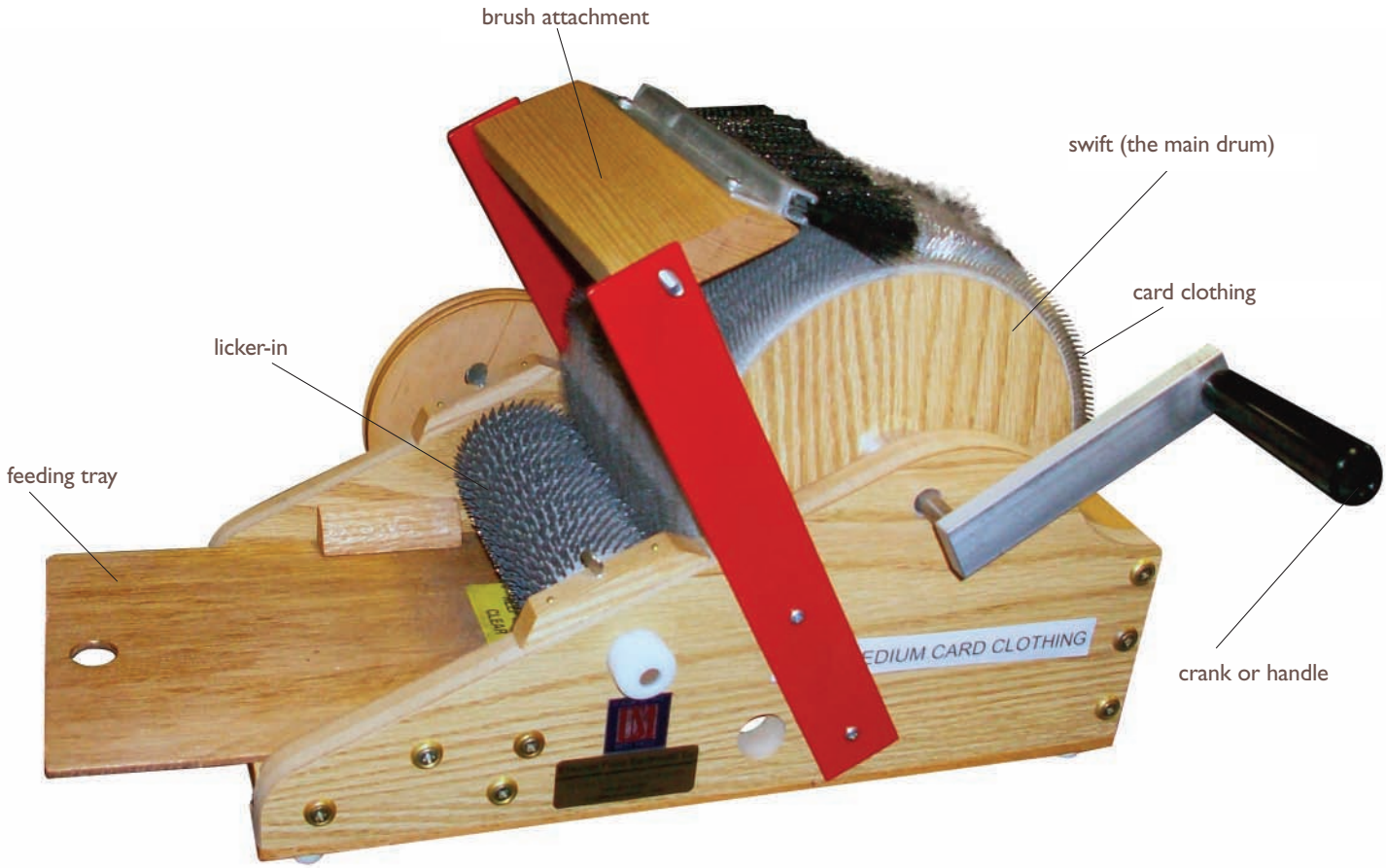
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Drumcarding

BY ROBIN RUSSO

As a new spinner, I found handcarding for large projects to be a tedious task. I began to purchase roving and top to avoid the carding process but was soon dissatisfied with both the spinning and knitting of those prepared items. Then in 1978, my sisters, my daughter, and I entered a sheep-to-shawl competition and won a Patrick Green drumcarder. This event changed my outlook forever. I now view the purchase of fiber and its preparation to be as much a part of the journey as the spinning and knitting.

Carding is a process of brushing clean fibers over opposing sets of short wire teeth (card clothing) to open and separate the fibers into a uniform mass. This can be accomplished with a set of handheld cards, a small tabletop drumcarder, or a very large industrial carding machine. The size of your carded mass will be determined by the size of the carding device you are using. Carded fibers produce woolen yarns that are soft, lofty, fuzzy, warm, bouncy, and lightweight. However, woolen items made from these yarns have a tendency to pill because of short fibers that are not secured in the spun yarn and so stick out of the woolen yarn. In worsted-spun yarns, the fibers are tucked inward as they are spun.

Understanding your drumcarder and what it is capable of is important. Here are a few things to look at.

Card Clothing (Wire Teeth)

Examine the wire teeth on the drum. Are they tall or short? Set close together or far apart? I have counted as few as 48 and as many as 240 wires per square inch of card clothing on the various devices I

own. Short wires, set close together are best for fine, shorter fibers. Wires set farther apart are best for longer, coarser fibers. The taller the wire, the more fiber the device can hold. Manufacturers generally say how much fiber a particular carding machine can hold, but it is easy enough to figure that out by trial and error. Once the drum is full, it will begin to put fiber onto the licker-in. The licker-in is the small cylinder on the drumcarder that draws the fiber onto the main (larger) cylinder. When that happens, stop carding. The licker-in should only have short noily fiber on it. You can also see when the drum has reached its capacity. The drum is full when the fibers uniformly blanket the teeth. If carding continues when the drum is too full, the fiber will transfer back onto the licker-in, which is counterproductive.

Drum Adjustment

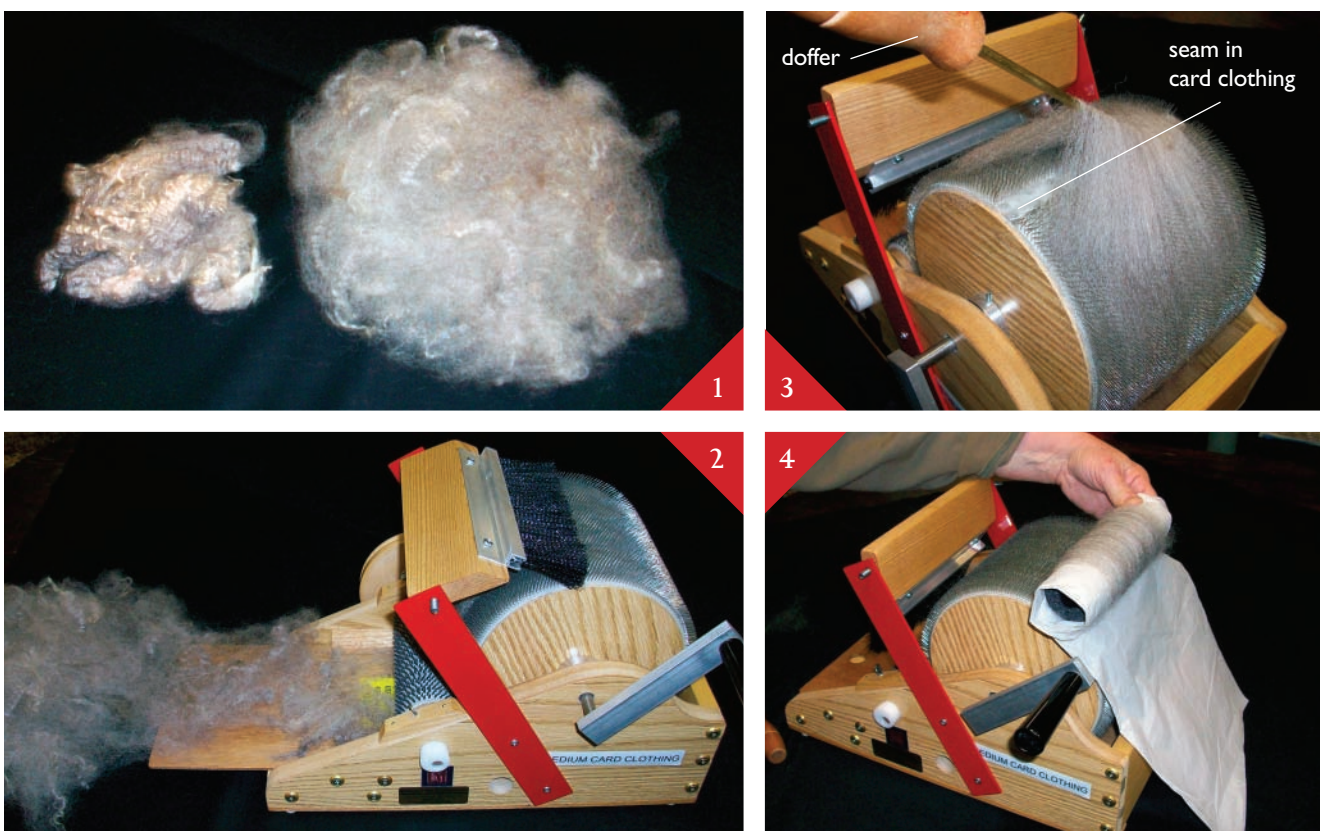
Are the drums adjusted properly? Do the teeth mesh together or do they just barely touch? The manufacturer may tell you what the adjustment should be on the equipment, but if not, you must make this determination yourself. Most carding machines have screws or wing nuts that can be used to adjust the drums. The teeth should not mesh, but should touch slightly. I refer to it as "kissing." Some manufacturers recommend slipping a piece of paper between the drums to determine the correct distance.

Oiling

Oiling should be done according to the manufacturer's specifications. If you do not have a guideline, look for oiling ports (small holes located near the metal rotating assemblies). Plastic and nylon sleeve bearings generally do not require lubrication. It is best to ask the manufacturer about oiling before you do so, just in case there are parts that can be damaged by the oil. I use automotive motor oil because it has a thicker viscosity than 3-in-1 oils or sewing machine oils that have a tendency to run.

Drive Band

On carding machines with a rubber or urethane drive band, I remove the drive band when it is not



1) Locks and teased fiber. **2)** Teased locks being fed into carder. **3)** Use the doffer to gently break the batt apart at the seam in the card clothing. **4)** Roll the batt off the drum using a paper towel tube. PHOTOS BY ROBIN RUSSO

in use to prevent it from "taking a set" (permanent stretching). Also, be sure drive bands are wrapped correctly before you card.

Carding Process

Following a few simple rules will help you produce beautiful, carded batts for spinning or felting with the least amount of effort.

Fiber: Make sure your fibers are clean. This means washed, dried, and reasonably free of chaff or other barnyard materials. If you have inadvertently felted your fleece during the washing process, do not expect your drumcarder to rectify the problem. Putting felted or very dirty fiber through your drumcarder only puts stress on the wires of the card clothing, making it difficult for the carder to produce a good batt. Bending the wires will adversely affect the look and quality of your batts in the future.

Picking: Pick or tease the fibers so that the locks are thoroughly opened up. You can do this by hand or with a picker. This is not as time consuming as you might think (unless you have felted the fiber in the washing process!). I put my wool in a box on the floor in front of my chair, and while I am watching the news, I pull the fibers apart *without* even looking at what I am doing. By the time the news is over, I have a very full box of fluffy fibers. This is especially important if you are blending two or more different types and/or colors of fiber. Mixing them up at this stage saves lots of time at the drumcarder. Remember to weigh out your amounts so that future batts will have the same proportions as the first.

Feeding: Place small amounts of fiber onto the tray that feeds the fiber under the licker-in, or small drum. Do not hold this fiber back by placing your hand on it. This will make the fiber wrap around the licker-in. The only fibers that should accumulate on the licker-in are the short, noily fibers that you do not want on the main drum. If you have overloaded your tray, stop turning the drum, pull back some of the fiber, and then begin carding again.

Removing the batt: When the drum is full, remove the batt. Look for the break in the card clothing on the large drum and move it to the top position. Place your doffer (the tool that looks like a thick ice pick) at an angle into the break and gently rock it up and down, breaking the batt apart as you head toward the far side of the drum. Once you have reached the far side and the batt is broken apart, use a paper towel tube or foam pipe insulation (cut to the width of the drum) to wrap the carded batt around as you roll it off the drum. If I have very fine, catchy fibers in my batt, I also use a piece of tissue paper, winding it on the tube with the fiber to prevent the fibers from sticking onto one another as the batt is rolled off the drum. Hold the tube or insulation against the teeth as you roll, and this will do a great job of picking up the majority of fibers on the drum. If you don't have a tube to roll the fibers onto, gather the "cut" edge of the batt and roll the drum forward so the batt is close to the wooden frame of the carder. If you pull the batt off against the frame, it will usually wind off smoothly.

Round Two

Break down your batt into three or four lengthwise strips or layers and feed each piece back into the drumcarder. If you want to blend the fibers from several batts, feed three or four strips (each from a different batt) for the new batt.

Finish

If your fibers are clean and well picked, your batt may be ready for spinning. Hold it up to the light and see how uniform and clean it is, making sure there are no noils or inconsistencies. If you are not satisfied, divide the batt into three or four pieces again and repeat the process. If your fibers are well teased, this third round should be sufficient to obtain a batt worth spinning.

When you sit down to spin, you will know if you did a complete enough job. Well-prepared fibers spin easily into beautiful, consistent yarns. If your batts become disorganized during the spinning process, simply put them through your drumcarder again to freshen them for spinning.

Batts for Felting

I use the same techniques for creating felting batts as I do for spinning, although felting tends to be more forgiving of any inconsistencies that may occur. The drumcarder is an essential tool for organizing the bits and pieces of fiber you create to lay out for a felting project. ⌘

Robin Russo lives in Bradford, Vermont, where she spins, knits, felts, and explores fibers and their many uses. She and her husband, Pat, also manufacture a line of products for handspinners. Over the past twenty years, Robin has taught at numerous gatherings of spinners, knitters, weavers, felters, and historical societies. When she isn't working as a paralegal, she enjoys spending time with her friends and family working out some new fiber-related idea. She has three sisters, a daughter, and numerous nieces who all spin, knit, felt, weave, and love to play with fiber.

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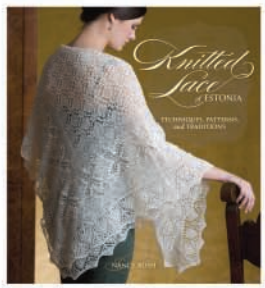
Fall 2008 Show Schedule

Pasadena Bead & Design Show Aug 14-17
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Oregon Flock & Fiber Festival Sept 27 & 28
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NY Sheep and Wool Festival Oct 18 & 19
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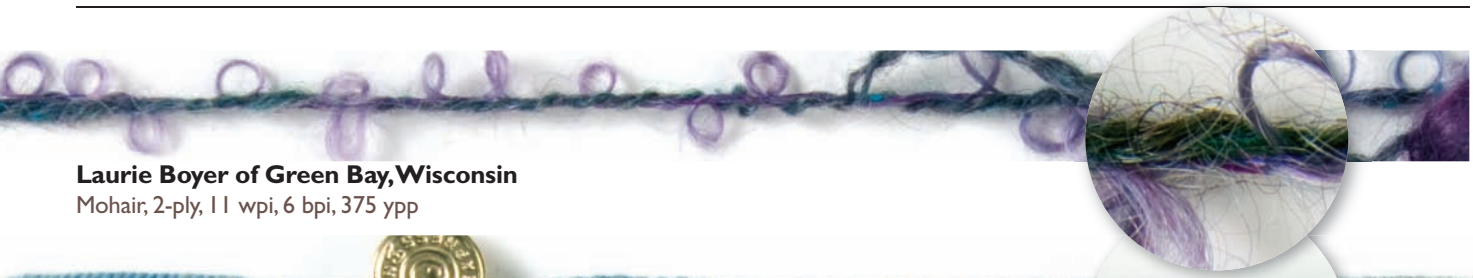
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New-to-You Yarns

With these yarns, the possibilities are endless! Whether it's a new fiber or a new technique, these yarns are full of experimentation. Shown on these two pages is a selection of the fiber types and spinning styles we received; view more on our website, spinoffmagazine.com. Yarns are shown at 100%. Details show the yarns magnified at 310%.

Next Challenge

The Spring 2009 issue of *Spin·Off* will feature Spindle-Spun Yarns. High whorl, low whorl, tahkli, or Turkish—anything goes! The deadline to submit is December 18, 2008. Please send a five-yard length of handspun yarn labeled with your name, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address (if you have one), and fiber content. Mail your comments and your yarn to *Spin·Off* Your Yarn, 201 E. Fourth St., Loveland, CO 80537. Call or e-mail us with questions at (970) 613-4682 or spinoff@interweave.com. The yarn won't be returned, but it will be used to raise money for a worthy charity. Please contact us at the above address if you'd like to volunteer to make a charity item using the yarns from previous Your Yarn entries. Yarns that don't appear in the magazine may be viewed on our website, spinoffmagazine.com.



Laurie Boyer of Green Bay, Wisconsin
Mohair, 2-ply, 11 wpi, 6 bpi, 375 ypp



Maureen Yukl of Clifton Park, New York
Wool, cabled, 12 wpi, 400 ypp
"A touch of Americana, deliberately high twist to use on an inkle loom to make hatbands and jewelry."



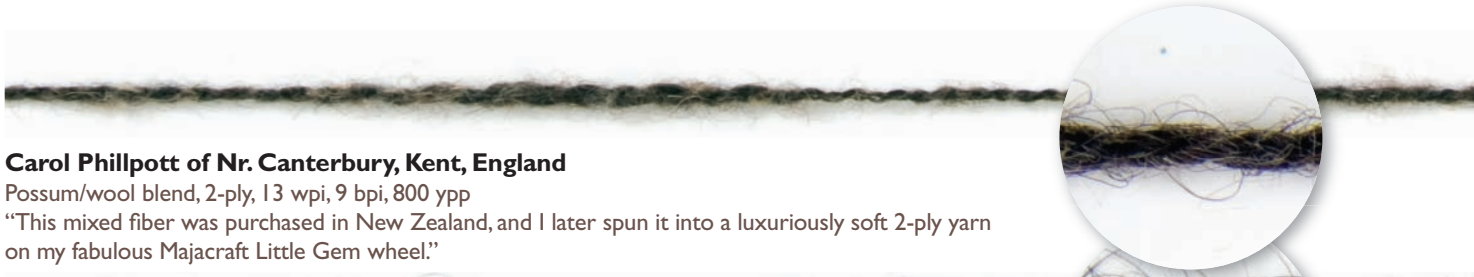
Janet King of Walkerton, Indiana
Wool blend, cabled, 12 wpi, 550 ypp
"After reading the article "Cables: Demystifying the Mysterious Yarn" in the Spring 2008 issue of *Spin·Off,* I decided to give cabling a try. I definitely intend to cable more yarns in the future now that I know the way to do it."



Keena Golden of San Francisco, California
Wool/silk blend, cabled, 13 wpi, 600 ypp
"This yarn was inspired by the book *Intertwined* by Lexi Boeger and the sparkle pom-poms at my son Sam's preschool. The pom-poms are threaded on a gold metallic sewing thread. Each cable strand is made of two plies of the wool/silk, and one ply of the gold/pom-pom thread. This was a great project to get me out of my spinning rut!"



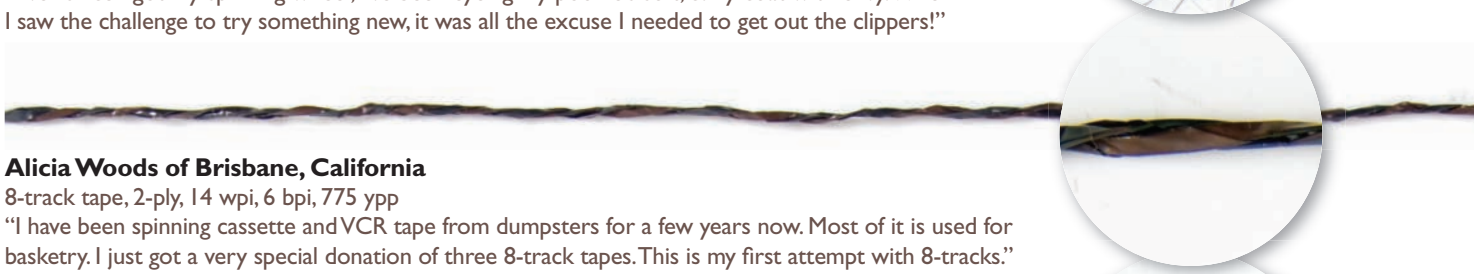
Margaret Kelly of Birch Tree, Missouri
Jacob wool/Australian shepherd blend, 2-ply, 13 wpi, 13 bpi, 525 ypp
"I raise Jacob sheep so access to working their fiber is not new to me. What is new is Beau Diddly, an Australian shepherd that a dear friend gave to me. While looking at the beautiful blue merle color, I thought it might blend nicely with the Jacob sheep wool. I carded 60% Jacob wool and 40% Beau Diddly and decided to ply it with 100% Beau Diddly."



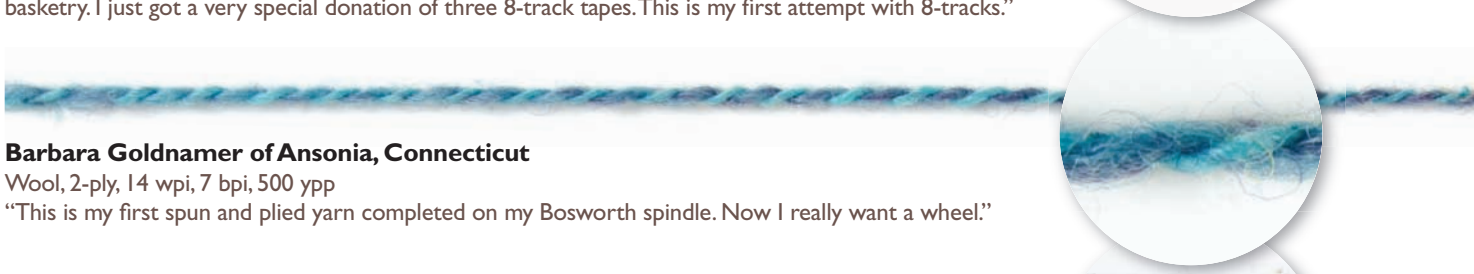
Carol Phillpott of Nr. Canterbury, Kent, England
Possum/wool blend, 2-ply, 13 wpi, 9 bpi, 800 ypp
"This mixed fiber was purchased in New Zealand, and I later spun it into a luxuriously soft 2-ply yarn on my fabulous Majacraft Little Gem wheel."



Kristine Franklin of Hibbing, Minnesota
Poodle, 2-ply, 13 wpi, 6 bpi, 1,075 ypp
"Ever since I got my spinning wheel, I've been eyeing my poodle's soft, curly coat with envy. When I saw the challenge to try something new, it was all the excuse I needed to get out the clippers!"



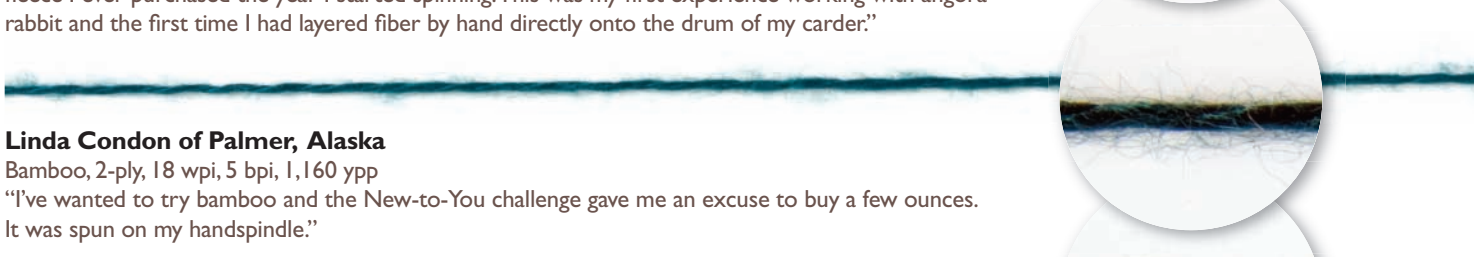
Alicia Woods of Brisbane, California
8-track tape, 2-ply, 14 wpi, 6 bpi, 775 ypp
"I have been spinning cassette and VCR tape from dumpsters for a few years now. Most of it is used for basketry. I just got a very special donation of three 8-track tapes. This is my first attempt with 8-tracks."



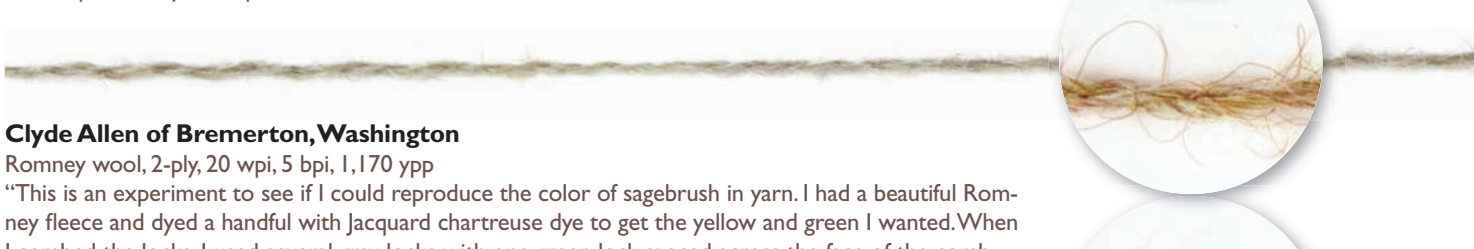
Barbara Goldnamer of Ansonia, Connecticut
Wool, 2-ply, 14 wpi, 7 bpi, 500 ypp
"This is my first spun and plied yarn completed on my Bosworth spindle. Now I really want a wheel."



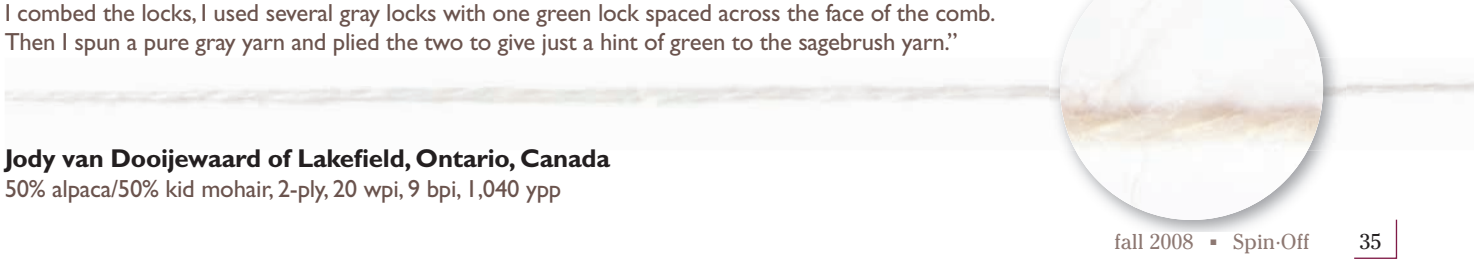
Judith Phillips of Bonny Doon, California
25% angora/75% Corriedale, cabled, 16 wpi, 510 ypp
"This yarn started out as an 8-ounce bag of white, clipped angora rabbit and the last locks from the first fleece I ever purchased the year I started spinning. This was my first experience working with angora rabbit and the first time I had layered fiber by hand directly onto the drum of my carder."



Linda Condon of Palmer, Alaska
Bamboo, 2-ply, 18 wpi, 5 bpi, 1,160 ypp
"I've wanted to try bamboo and the New-to-You challenge gave me an excuse to buy a few ounces. It was spun on my handspindle."



Clyde Allen of Bremerton, Washington
Romney wool, 2-ply, 20 wpi, 5 bpi, 1,170 ypp
"This is an experiment to see if I could reproduce the color of sagebrush in yarn. I had a beautiful Romney fleece and dyed a handful with Jacquard chartreuse dye to get the yellow and green I wanted. When I combed the locks, I used several gray locks with one green lock spaced across the face of the comb. Then I spun a pure gray yarn and plied the two to give just a hint of green to the sagebrush yarn."



Jody van Dooijewaard of Lakefield, Ontario, Canada
50% alpaca/50% kid mohair, 2-ply, 20 wpi, 9 bpi, 1,040 ypp

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Southeastern Iowa

BY AMANDA BERKA

Being an Iowa gal, I figured there must be some treats to find back home. So on a recent trip to visit family I made it a priority to find the fiber. Whether you're just passing through on I-80 or looking to make a trip from one of the surrounding metropolitan areas (Chicago: 4 hours, Minneapolis: 5 hours, Omaha: 4 hours, St. Louis: 4.5 hours), there are some great destinations to check out.



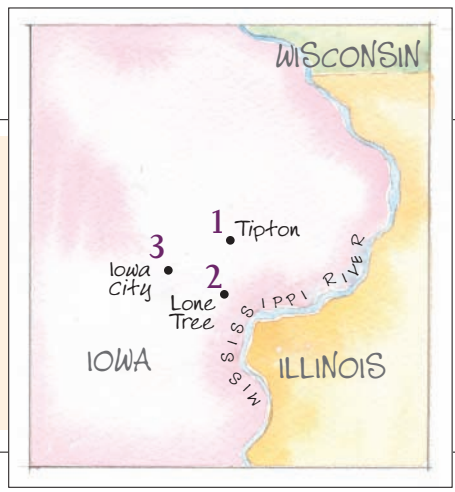
1. My first stop was to visit Janette Ryan-Busch of **Fae Ridge Farm** who has been in the fiber business for more than fifteen years. She is well known in the area not only as an organic farmer but also as the local Ashford dealer. She got started in spinning when fellow organic farmers needed some tomatoes to can. Janette had tomatoes, but what she wanted was someone to mow for her. Soon she had traded tomatoes for two Angora goats. It wasn't long before she ended up bartering for a wheel and learning to spin. Now, Janette shares the property where she and her husband raised their sons with twenty-some goats, sheep, and llamas, and a small shop built at the end of the drive. Janette enjoys dyeing mohair, which she blends with naturally colored sheep fleece.



Janette not only stocks her shop with her own custom fiber blends, but she also carries socially responsible yarns including Peace Fleece and Mango Moon. Janette looks to do business with family companies and those that have a clear mission. Her own mission is to "leave the world a better place by doing organic agriculture and supplying socially responsible fibers."



2. Betty Shreeves of **Lone Tree Wools** welcomed me into her home, where she dyes, spins, weaves, and knits. Her special, one-of-a-kind fiber blends, hand-dyed silks for spinning, and woven scarves are sold at several regional shows she attends each year. I visited on a warm summer



Please contact your destination before visiting. Some shops are open by appointment only.

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day so Betty had her outdoor dye workshop—a picnic table with colorful mason jars against a busy flower garden—set up, but her indoor dye kitchen, outfitted with generous ventilation, serves her well throughout the year. Betty dyes wool from sheep from Fort Madison, Iowa, for her blends.

Although Betty has been a textile artist since the late 1960s, she has had a varied professional background since graduating from college as a geology major (with a minor in art). Her work has included research and analysis of heavy metals, teaching school, and applied math. Her interest in textiles started as a child weaving, but then she got serious while living in North Carolina, a hub of craft. "I needed something to feed the hungry loom," she says matter-of-factly about how she started spinning. As a self proclaimed "technique monger," Betty immerses herself in fiber, textiles, and art at-large.

3. My final stop was to visit Diane Fleshin at **Fields of Fiber**. After twenty years in the Army, Diane settled down on nearly eighty wooded acres, where she and her family have been for the last ten years. The homestead includes a three-acre organic berry garden as well as three Jacob sheep, a llama, and four Angora goats. Diane originally got the sheep when she decided she wanted to knit a sweater from their fleece, before even knowing how to spin. Now she spins, weaves, and knits and has a passion for sharing the fiber arts with area school children. Each summer, along with business partner Sue Kann and part-time employees, Diane offers six weeklong sessions of quality fiber and art instruction at a workshop built on her property. Most of the children come to her Tipton studio from the surrounding communities of Iowa City, West Branch, and Marion. Depending on the week, children may get to witness the animals' shearing, and regardless of when they visit, children get the chance to feed goats, dye fiber, spin, and weave on two-harness looms. For more information about the summer programs, visit IowaFiberArts.com.

Diane has another passion besides the workshops she holds, and that's corn. She is a proponent of the amazing crop—in different varieties it's suitable for everything from food to fuel to clothing to sweeteners. Now she offers an all-American yarn made entirely of corn. In Blair, Nebraska, the corn is turned into pellets that are then extruded into a fiber that acts like nylon. Diane has the fiber spun into yarn at Morning Sun in Iowa before using dispersal dye to impart her unique color sense.





Amanda Berka, a native Iowan, spins and knits on the Colorado Front Range where she lives with her family.

ALL PHOTOS BY AMANDA BERKA.

This year heavy precipitation in southeastern Iowa, along with much of the Midwest, contributed to the worst flooding in Iowa's recorded history. If you would like to help the ongoing relief efforts, the following is a list of organizations accepting aid.

The American Red Cross Iowa City Office
373 East College St.
Iowa City, IA 52240
(319) 337-2119
(800) 982-2438
http://grantwood-redcross.org

Corridor Recovery
PO Box 11246
Cedar Rapids, IA 52410
info@corridorrecovery.org;
www.corridorrecovery.org

The Humane Society of the United States Central States Regional Office
1061 Grand Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55105
(651) 222-3985
www.hsus.org

United Way Johnson County Office
1150 5th St., Ste. 290
Coralville, IA 52241
(319) 338-7823
www.unitedwayjc.org

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It works great! I wish I would have bought one a long time ago! ~Ellen

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The Woolee Winders really spoil a spinner! ~Robin

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What a wonderful invention! I am so amazed at the simplicity and the smooth operation. ~Carolyn

The WooLee Winder is the greatest invention since the wheel! ~VIP Fibers

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The Great Spinning Wheel Roundup

Choosing a spinning wheel is an important decision. The perfect wheel will stay with you for years, loyally supporting you through thick and thin (and maybe even art yarn or those 5 pounds of Tencel your sister bought you). Picking a wheel is a big investment, and with all the spinning wheels on the market, how do you choose the one that's right for you? Many spinners will tell you that there's no alternative to physically sitting down and testing out the wheel you're thinking about buying. Giving a wheel a "test-spin" is very valuable if you're able to do so, but most buyers also consider many others factors when purchasing a wheel. Drive type, weight, price—these are all important details to consider to make sure you get the wheel that fits you best.

We've taken a little bit of the work out of the quest to find a perfect wheel. On the following pages you will find a list of every ready-to-order spinning wheel we could find, complete with detailed product specifications. We've also included a small sampling of custom wheel makers, in case you're looking for something truly unique. Whatever your spinning needs are, we hope this guide can narrow down your search and put you that much closer to finding the perfect wheel for you.

Abbreviations:

Drive Types:
BO = bobbin lead
DD = double drive
DR = direct drive (for smaller wheels in which treadling turns the wheel directly and there is no drive band)
SC = scotch tension

Treadles:
DT = double treadle
ST = single treadle

Wheels are labeled "yes" in the "travel size?" column only if they easily collapse or are already very small without modification.

Bobbin capacity can also be a point of interest when choosing a wheel. The Woolery has developed an objective way to calculate bobbin capacity. Their bobbin capacity chart can be found at www.woolery.com/pages/selectwheel.html#bobbincapacity.

Most wheel makers offer additional accessories, add-ons, and spare parts for their wheels. We have included only the items that come standard with each wheel. Please check with your wheel manufacturer to see what optional items may be available.

All wheel specifications were correct at the time of printing, but please double-check with the manufacturer prior to buying as prices may change.

Contact Information

Ashford
distributed by Foxglove Fiberarts Supply
8040 NE Day Rd. West, Ste. 4F
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110
(206) 780-2747
www.foxglovefiber.com

Babe
W8131 Bay View Dr.
Whitewater, WI 53190
(262) 473-2009
inventor@babesfibergarden.com
www.babesfibergarden.com

Baynes
20 Gordons Rd.
PO Box 218
Ashburton
New Zealand
baynes@ashburton.co.nz
www.spinning.co.nz

Columbine
90 East Center St.
Moab, UT 84532
(435) 259-8404
info@desertthread.com
www.desertthread.com

Journey Wheel
29 Main St.
Acton, MA 01720
(978) 264-0584
www.journeywheel.com

Kromski
distributed by New Voyager Trading
PO Box 468
Murfreesboro, NC 27855
(252) 398-4396
mail@newvoyager.com
www.newvoyager.com

Lendrum
403 Millhaven Rd.
Odessa, ON, Canada
K0H 2H0
(613) 386-7151
gord@lendrum.ca
www.lendrum.ca

Louet
3425 Hands Rd.
Prescott, ON, Canada
K0E 1T0
(613) 925-4502
info@louet.com
www.louet.com

Majacraft
586 Oropi Rd.
RD3
Tauranga
New Zealand
+ 64 (7) 543-3618
www.majacraft.co.nz

Merlin Tree
2093 Barton Rd.
West Glover, VT 05875
(802) 754-6433
spinfix@sover.net
www.themerlintree.com

Montana Looms
412 Plymouth St.
Missoula, MT 59801
(406) 721-2547
info@montanalooms.com
www.montanalooms.com

Pocket Wheel
2908 Cottonwood Ave.
Bellingham, WA 98225
dodd.guren@clearwire.net
http://gnoam.com/pocketwheels.html

Schacht and Schacht-Reeves
6101 Ben Pl.
Boulder, CO 80301
(303) 442-3212
info@schachtspindle.com
www.schachtspindle.com

Spinolution
kris@kriana.com
www.spinolution.com

Custom Wheel Makers

Alden Amos
Wheels starting at $1,400
Approximate wait time: 2–3 years
11178 Upper Previtali Rd.
Jackson, CA 95642
gaustad@jps.net
http://pweb.jps.net/~gaustad/

Betty Roberts
Wheels starting at $550
Approximate wait time: 1–2 years
broberts8@q.com
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SpinningWheels_by_BettyRoberts

Carson Cooper
Wheels starting at $1,547
Approximate wait time: 6-8 months
PO Box 66554
Scotts Valley, CA 95067
(831) 234-1114
www.ztwist.com

Golding Fiber Tools
Wheels starting at $4,250
Approximate wait time: 5 years
849 Saxtons River Rd.
Saxtons River, VT 05154
(800) 710-1872
www.GoldingFiberTools.com
carving@sover.net

Norm Hall
Wheels starting at $2,500
Approximate wait time: 4 years
149 Vrowan Hills Rd.
Oxford, NY 13830
(607) 843-9686

Robin Wheels
Wheels starting at $995
Approximate wait time: 2 years
9 Robins Ln.
Parsonsfield, ME 04047
(207) 793-8468
(877) 576-8825
robinwheels@roadrunner.com
www.robinwheels.com

Watson Wheels
Wheels starting at $1,295
Approximate wait time: 3–6 months
8542 Emard Terrace,
North Saanich, BC, Canada
V8L 1K3
(250) 656-6522
watsonwheels@shaw.ca
www.watsonwheels.com

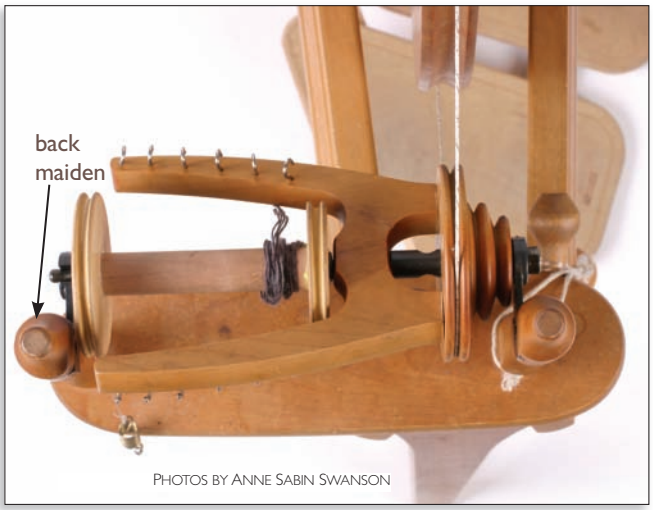
Wyatt Wheels
Wheels starting at $1,900
Approximate wait time: 18 months–2 years
(210) 657-6177
wyattwh@megsinet.net
www.wyattwheels.com

COMPANY	MODEL	STYLE	DRIVE TYPE	TREADLES	TRAVEL SIZE?	WHEEL DIAMETER
Ashford	Country Spinner	upright	BO	DT	no	18 in
	Traveler Double Drive	upright	DD, SC	DT	no	18 in
	Traveler Single Drive	upright	SC	DT	no	18 in
	Joy Double Treadle	upright	SC	DT	yes	15.75 in
	Kiwi	upright	SC	DT	no	17.5 in
	Elizabeth 2	saxony	DD, SC	ST	no	24 in
	Traditional Double Drive	saxony	DD, SC	ST	no	22 in
	Traditional Single Drive	saxony	SC	ST	no	22 in
	Joy Single Treadle	upright	SC	ST	yes	15.75 in
Babe	Pedal Pusher	upright	BO	DT	no	21.25 in
	Bulky	upright	BO	DT	yes	21.25 in
	Spinnrock Production	upright	BO, SC	DT	yes	21.25 in
	Fiber Starter	upright	BO, DD, SC	either	yes	17
	Production Wheel	upright	BO	either	yes	21.25 in
	Double Maiden	upright	BO	either	no	17 or 21.25 in
	Pinkie	upright	BO	either	yes	12 in
	Flyer Lead	upright	SC	either	yes	21.25 in
Baynes	Colonial	upright	SC	either	no	16 in
Columbine	Y Series	upright	DD	ST	no	14 in
Journey Wheel	Journey Wheel	upright	DD, SC	either	yes	accelerator wheel
Kromski	Symphony	saxony	DD, SC	DT	no	24 in
	Minstrel	upright	DD, SC	DT	no	18 in
	Sonata	upright	SC	DT	yes	19 in
	Polonaise	norwegian	DD, SC	ST	no	24 in
	Mazurka	upright	DD, SC	ST	no	16 in
	Prelude	saxony	SC	ST	no	18 in

RATIOS	WEIGHT	INCLUDED	STARTING PRICE
4:1	14.5 lb	bobbin, threading hook, learn-to-spin booklet	$500
6.5:1, 8.5:1, (11.5:1 bobbin lead)	15 lb	4 bobbins, threading hook, learn-to-spin booklet, built-in lazy kate	$420
5.5:1, 10:1, 14:1	15 lb	4 bobbins, threading hook, learn-to-spin booklet, built-in lazy kate	$410
6:1, 8:1, 11:1, 14:1	13 lb	3 bobbins, threading hook, learn-to-spin booklet, built-in lazy kate	$575
5.5:1, 7.25:1	12 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate, threading hook, learn-to-spin booklet	$295
8.5:1, 11:1, 15:1 (18:1 bobbin lead)	20 lb	4 bobbins, lazy kate, threading hook, learn-to-spin booklet	$645
7.5:1, 10.1:1, (14.1:1 bobbin lead)	17.5 lb	4 bobbins, lazy kate, threading hook, learn-to-spin booklet	$435
6.2:1, 12.5:1, 17.5:1	17.5 lb	4 bobbins, lazy kate, threading hook, learn-to-spin booklet	$390
6:1, 8:1, 11:1, 14:1	11 lb	3 bobbins, threading hook, learn-to-spin booklet, built-in lazy kate	$520
5.875:1, 7.5:1, 21:1	10 lb	5 bobbins, lazy kate, 4 oz Brown Sheep roving	$223.95
4.25:1	10 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate, 4 oz Brown Sheep roving, orifice hook	$330.95
5.875:1	8.6 lb	2 bobbins and 1 ply bobbin, lazy kate, 4 oz Brown Sheep roving, orifice hook	$235.95 (BO), $239.95 (SC)
5:1, 6:1	7 lb	6 bobbins, lazy kate, 4 oz Brown Sheep roving	$194.95 (ST), $234.95 (DT)
5.875:1, 7.5:1, 19:1	7 lb	6 bobbins, lazy kate, 4 oz Brown Sheep roving	$214.95 (ST), $249.95 (DT)
5:1, 6:1 or 5.875:1, 7.5:1	8.5 lb	6 bobbins, lazy kate, 4 oz Brown Sheep roving	upon request
3.25:1	4 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate, 4 oz Brown Sheep roving	$164.95 (ST), $191.95 (DT)
7:1	10 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate, 4 oz Brown Sheep roving, orifice hook	$239.95 (ST), $274.95 (DT)
5.5:1, 7.5:1 or 9:1, 11:1 (pick one flyer)	12.5 lb	4 bobbins, extra drive band, lazy kate, spare-part kit	$320 (ST), $360 (DT)
4:1, 5:1, 7:1	10 lb	1 bobbin, wrench, 8 oz fiber	$450
8:1, 10:1, 14:1, 16:1	14 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate	$725 (ST), $840 (DT)
7.5:1, 10:1, 16:1 20:1	15 lb	3 bobbins, threading hook, tensioned lazy kate, wheel oil, DVD	$550
6.5:1, 8.5:1, 12:1, 16:1	13 lb	3 bobbins, threading hook, tensioned lazy kate, wheel oil, DVD	$419
6.7:1, 12.5:1, 14:1	11.5 lb	3 bobbins, threading hook, tensioned lazy kate, wheel oil, padded bag	$520
8:1, 12:1, 16:1 20:1	16 lb	3 bobbins, threading hook, tensioned lazy kate, wheel oil, DVD	$625
6:1, 8:1, 10:1, 12:1	9 lb	3 bobbins, threading hook, tensioned lazy kate, distaff, wheel oil, DVD	$399
6:1, 10.5:1, 13:1	9 lb	3 bobbins, threading hook, tensioned lazy kate, wheel oil, DVD, cotton and elastic drive bands	$349

COMPANY	MODEL	STYLE	DRIVE TYPE	TREADLES	TRAVEL SIZE?	WHEEL DIAMETER
Lendrum	Saxony	saxony	DD, SC	DT	no	28 in
	Original	upright	SC	either	yes	19 in
	Original (complete kit)	upright	SC	either	yes	19 in
Louet	S10 DT	upright	BO	DT	no	20 in
	S51 DT	upright	BO	DT	no	20 in
	S75	upright	BO	DT	no	20 in
	S45	upright	SC	DT	no	11 in
	Julia	upright	SC	DT	yes	20 in
	Victoria	upright	SC	DT	yes	14.5 in
	S10	upright	BO	ST	no	20 in
	S17	upright	BO	ST	no	20 in
	S15	upright	BO	ST	no	20 in
	S51	upright	BO	ST	no	20 in
Majacraft	Rose	upright	SC	DT	yes	17 in
	Little Gem	upright	SC	DT	yes	8.25 in
	Millie	upright	SC	DT	no	14 in
	Suzie standard	upright	SC	DT	yes	13 in
	Suzie pro	upright	SC	DT	yes	13 in
	Suzie alpaca	upright	SC	DT	yes	13 in
Merlin Tree	HitchHiker	upright	DR	ST	yes	14 in
Montana Looms	Spinning Wheel	upright	DD, SC	DT	no	14.25 in
Pocket Wheel	Pocket Wheel	upright	DR	DT	yes	13 in
Schacht	Ladybug	upright	DD, SC	DT	no	16 in
	Matchless	upright	BO, DD, SC	either	no	19.5 in
Schacht-Reeves	24" Saxony	saxony	DD, SC	either	no	24 in
	30" Saxony	saxony	DD, SC	either	no	30 in
Spinolution	Mach 1	upright	SC	DT	no	20 in

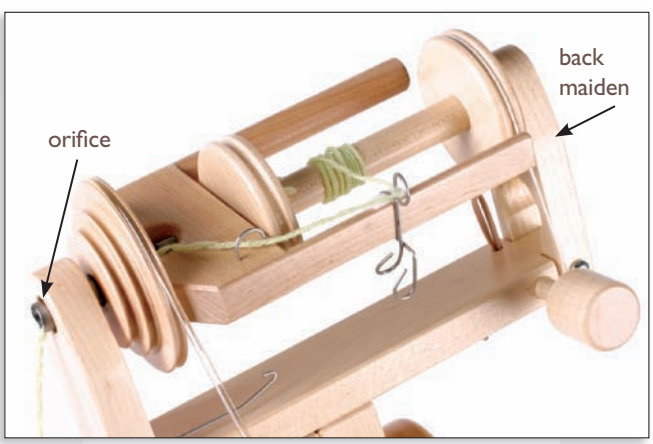
RATIOS	WEIGHT	INCLUDED	STARTING PRICE
8:1, 12:1, 15:1, 18:1	25 lb	4 bobbins, lazy kate	$1,034
6:1, 8:1, 10:1	14 lb	4 bobbins, lazy kate	$374 (ST), $495 (DT)
5:1, 6:1, 7:1, 8:1, 9:1, 10:1, 12:1, 15:1, 17:1	17 lb	4 regular bobbins, lazy kate, jumbo plying head, plying drive band, 1 large bobbin, fast flyer	$500 (ST), $622 (DT)
5.5:1, 7.5:1, 10.5:1	13.5 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate	$595
5.5:1, 7.5:1, 10.5:1	13.5 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate	$635
5.5:1, 7.5:1, 10.5:1	10.5 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate	$665
7:1, 12:1, 20:1	10 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate	$895
6:1, 8.5:1, 12.5:1, 19:1	11 lb	4 bobbins, lazy kate	$635
6:1, 8.5:1, 13:1	7.5 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate, carrying bag	$675
5.5:1, 7.5:1, 10.5:1	13.5 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate	$510
5.5:1, 7.5:1, 10.5:1	12 lb	2 bobbins, lazy kate	$315
5.5:1, 7.5:1, 10.5:1	13.5 lb	lazy kate	$410
5.5:1, 7.5:1, 10.5:1	13 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate	$530
4.2:1, 5.1:1, 8.4:1, 11.3:1, 15.6:1, 5.9:1, 8.9:1, 12.7:1, 15.4:1, 19.5:1	13 lb	4 bobbins, bobbin box/lazy kate	$865
4.5:1, 6:1, 8.5:1, 10.5:1, 12.7:1	8 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate, carrying case	$735
4.1:1, 5.2:1, 6.9:1, 9.2:1, 12:1	12 lb	4 bobbins	$660
4:1, 6.3:1, 9.2:1, 11.5:1, 15:1	14.5 lb	4 bobbins, bobbin storage/kate	$775
4.4:1, 6.5:1, 9.5:1, 11.8:1, 15:1	14.5 lb	4 bobbins, bobbin storage/kate	$795
3.2:1, 4.6:1, 6.2:1, 8.7:1, 12:1	14.5 lb	4 bobbins, travel lazy kate/bobbin storage	$830
7:1, 9:1, 13:1	9.2 lb	3 bobbins, lazy kate, oil bottle, threading hook	$278
6:1–18:1	16 lb	4 bobbins, lazy kate	$1,250
3.5:1–10:1	6.5 lb	3 bobbins	$450
7:1, 9:1, 10.5:1, 12.5:1	12.5 lb	3 bobbins, threading hook, medium and fast whorls	$550
9:1, 11:1, 13:1, 15.5:1	16 lb (ST), 17 lb (DT)	4 bobbins, carry strap, 2 drive bands, threading hook, lazy kate	$925
4:1, 11:1, 12:1, 15:1	20 lb	3 bobbins, 2 whorls, lazy kate, threading hook	$945 (ST), $1,065 (DT)
9:1, 14:1, 15:1, 18:1	28 lb	3 bobbins, 2 whorls, lazy kate, threading hook	$1,160 (ST), $1,335 (DT)
3:1, 5:1, 10:1, 15:1	22 lb		$495



To release the flyer on this Ashford Traditional, you can rotate the back maiden or pop the flyer shaft out of the back bearing.



The flyer of this Majacraft wheel is designed in two parts; the orifice and arms are unscrewed from the shaft to change the bobbin.



The back maiden on this Lendrum wheel folds down to release the flyer. If your flyer has a sliding guide, pass the yarn through it, then through the orifice.

Getting Acquainted with Your Wheel

from *Start Spinning: Everything You Need to Know to Make Great Yarn*

BY MAGGIE CASEY

Take some time to make friends with your wheel before you start to spin. Set aside time when you won't be interrupted, put on some good music, and take a good look at your wheel. Figure out where the drive band and the brake band go. Learn how to take off the flyer and change the bobbins. If you don't have an instruction book, check the manufacturer's website or ask the shop where you bought your wheel.

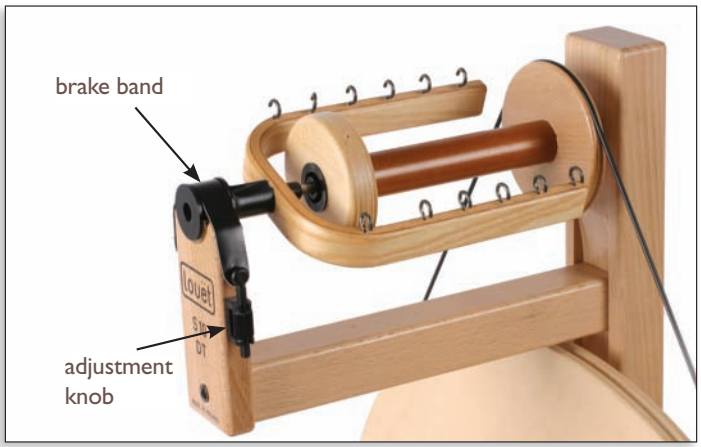
CHANGING BOBBINS AND WHORLS

Most wheels have a maiden that folds down or rotates so you can remove the flyer; some wheels have no front maiden and the end of the flyer shaft is threaded so it screws into the back maiden or upright. It will be easier to take off the flyer and bobbin if you take off the drive band and/or brake band before removing the flyer. Some scotch tension flyers have the whorl built in at the front of the flyer, and others have a separate whorl that screws onto or fits the end of the spindle shaft. If you have a whorl that screws on, screw it on carefully—you don't want to strip the threaded area. Some whorls screw on clockwise and some counterclockwise. If your wheel can function as scotch tension or double drive, make sure you have the bobbin on the correct way. After you have put your wheel back together, it is time to get to work.

PRACTICE TREADLING

Most yarn is spun clockwise (to the right), so start your wheel in that direction and just treadle. It isn't a race; treadle slowly but with enough momentum that the wheel continues to turn clockwise and doesn't stall and go backward.

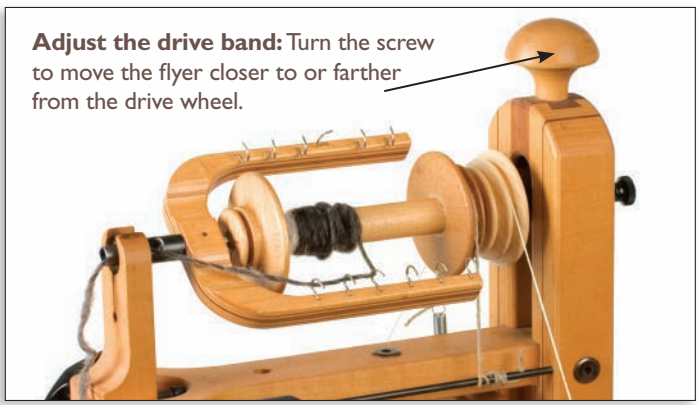
Think of the drive wheel as a clock. If you position the foot-

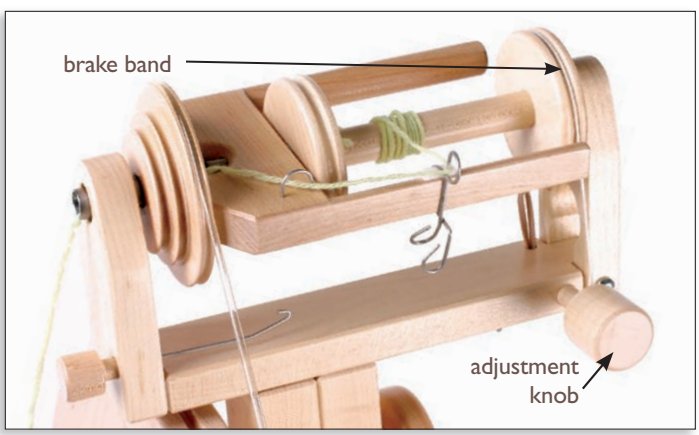


Brake band and adjustment knob on bobbin-lead wheel



On a double-drive wheel, a screw mechanism adjusts the tension on the flyer and bobbin.





Brake band and adjustment knob on scotch tension wheel



With a Majacraft "delta" orifice, pass the yarn through the triangle.

man (the part of the wheel that connects the treadle to the drive wheel) at 1:00 and make the first treadle strong, momentum will help keep the wheel going clockwise. Take off your shoes—your bare foot is more flexible and it may be easier to treadle. (It will also protect the finish on your treadle.) You may find it easier to use your hand to start the wheel, but be careful not to knock off the drive band when you do.

While you practice, sit on different chairs to find which one is the most comfortable. Both chair height and seat depth can make a big difference in treadling comfort. My favorite spinning chair is an inexpensive secretary's chair from an office supply store. It has a small amount of back support and no arms, and I can adjust the padded seat to the perfect height. However, the wheels on a chair can be tricky on a smooth floor, so always spin on a rug. Treadle while you talk on the phone or read until it becomes a natural movement.

ADJUSTING TENSION

Learning how to adjust the tension on your wheel is crucial to learning how to spin. You want to work in partner-



Shown with optional Lazy Kate

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ship with your wheel, and if you have the drive band and the tension (brake band) adjusted properly, it will be easy.

Scotch tension wheels usually have a brake band with a spring or a rubber band to control tension. The brake band goes over the bobbin and is controlled with a knob. To tighten the tension, turn the knob so the spring or rubber band is stretched out a little. The more the spring or rubber band is stretched out, the stronger the wheel will pull the yarn onto the bobbin. Relax the tension, and the yarn will pull on more slowly.

On bobbin-lead wheels like the Louet, the drive band is on the bobbin and the brake is a strap over the flyer. Again, the tighter the tension on the brake band, the stronger the pull of the wheel. If the yarn is being pulled on too fast, loosen the brake band over the flyer.

On a double-drive wheel, you have only one adjustment because the drive band controls both the flyer and the bobbin. Usually there is a screw-type mechanism that tightens the tension on the drive band by moving the flyer farther away from the wheel. When you tighten the drive band, the yarn will be pulled on more firmly. However, if the drive band tension is too tight, it will be hard to keep the wheel going in the same direction. Loosen the tension on the drive band, and the yarn will be pulled onto the wheel gently.

ADJUSTING THE DRIVE BAND

Drive bands are usually made out of cotton string or polyurethane. Drive bands made out of cotton can be adjusted; the polyurethane bands are self-adjusting. There should be just enough tension on the drive band, so that when the wheel is treadled, the wheel will turn the flyer or bobbin easily without any drive-band slippage. If the drive band is too loose, increase the tension just so the drive band doesn't slip. If the drive band is too tight, the wheel will be hard to treadle. When adjusting the tension on your drive band, loosen it enough that when you treadle, the flyer doesn't move. Then tighten the tension gradually until the flyer turns when the drive wheel does.

Most wheels adjust the drive band by changing the distance between the flyer

and the drive wheel. The mother-of-all is often attached to a screw mechanism or hinge to move it closer or farther away from the drive wheel. Look at the wheel manufacturer's information to see how to adjust the tension on the drive band.

GETTING READY TO SPIN

To start, you will want to be on the largest whorl for the slowest speed. Remember: slow is bigger. The largest whorl will give you the most control.

The yarn will be wound onto your bobbin with the help of a leader, a piece of wool yarn tied to the bobbin. Start with a piece of plied wool yarn about 24 inches (61 cm) long. You want the leader to wind onto the bobbin and not slip, so tie the yarn on firmly. Leave a long enough tail to wrap around the bobbin again and tie another knot and then a third knot. Once the leader is on your bobbin, take the yarn over the hooks of the flyer. It doesn't matter which hook you start on, but it is important that the yarn is engaged by all the other hooks between that one and the orifice. Some wheels don't have hooks but have a thread guide that moves up and down the flyer arm; be sure to thread your leader through that guide and then the one near the orifice.

To get the leader through the orifice, you will probably need a small tool called an orifice hook, which you insert into the orifice to catch the yarn and pull it through. Some wheels have built-in orifice hooks and holders; if yours doesn't, tie a string around the hook handle and hang it nearby. Keep the orifice hook close at hand, because you will need it frequently. The orifice of some wheels will be large enough that you can just pull the leader through with your finger, while Majacraft wheels have been designed without an orifice at all.

TENSION IN ACTION

Spend some time playing with the tension now that you have a leader on the bobbin. The tighter the brake band, the faster the yarn will be pulled onto the bobbin and the harder it will be to treadle.

Start with very light or no tension on your brake band, so that your bobbin spins with no drag. Hold onto your



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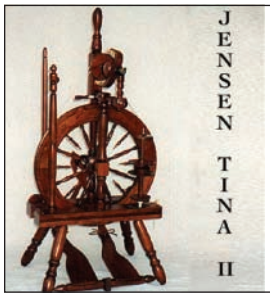
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leader and start treadling. The leader should pull onto the bobbin very slowly or not at all while the leader gets more and more twisted. Now tighten the tension on the brake band a lot and see what a difference it makes. The leader will feel like it is being sucked right out of your hand. Pull the leader back out of the orifice and keep adjusting the tension on your brake band, degree by degree. (You may need to stop and let the twist run out of the leader or turn the wheel backward if the leader gets too twisted and kinked.) Adjust the tension in small increments; an eighth or a quarter turn of the tension knob changes the tension considerably.

If you have a double-drive wheel, do this same exercise but adjust the drive band, not the brake band. Tighten and loosen the tension in small increments and see how it changes the rate at which the leader is pulled onto the bobbin.

Learning how to adjust the tension on your wheel makes all the difference when it comes to an enjoyable and productive spinning experience. The looser the drive band and the brake bands are, the easier it will be to treadle, but if they are too loose, the yarn won't draw in. Don't be afraid to play with your wheel and find the perfect tension for the yarn you are spinning. Be aware, however, that each fiber or size of yarn may require different tension.

Trust me—learning how to adjust your spinning wheel is way easier than using a computer. Start with the tension very loose, with no draw-in, and tighten the brake or drive band (for double-drive) until the yarn is pulled on firmly when you relax your hold on it. As you are spinning you may make small adjustments; an eighth or a quarter turn is all you need. Whenever you begin to spin, a good way to find the perfect tension is to loosen the tension so there is no draw-in at all and then gently tighten the tension until it is comfortable. As I tell my students, "Loose till tight until it's right!" ⌘

Maggie Casey is co-owner of Shuttles, Spindles, and Skeins in Boulder, Colorado.

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The Cloisters Sweater

BY SARAH SWETT



Project Notes

Fiber: 32 oz fresh Cormo-cross fleece to produce 24 oz yarn for 14¾ oz sweater.

Preparation: Washed and drumcarded on a Patrick Green drumcarder.

Drafting method: Each batt was torn into zigzag strips, lightly drafted into roving, rolled into a ball, spun long draw (as learned from Mabel Ross at SOAR 1989) for a semiworsted yarn. It is semiworsted because the fibers are rendered somewhat parallel by the drumcarder, so the resulting yarn has less trapped air than a true woolen yarn.

Wheel: Lendrum Saxony.

Ratio: Singles, 20:1; plying, 16:1.

Singles direction: Z.

Plied direction: 3-ply S.

Dye: Weld with alum mordant.

Plied bumps per inch: 9.

Plied wraps per inch: 13.

Total yardage: 1,702.

Yardage used: 1,348.

Yards per pound: 1,463.

Yarn classification: 3-ply sportweight.

Needles: Circular needles (24" for body and 16" to begin sleeves) and double-pointed needles, U.S. size 2 (2.75 mm).

Notions: Two stitch markers; stitch holders.

Gauge: 5 sts and 8.5 rows = 1" in stockinette; 5.5 sts = 1" in lace pattern.

Finished weight: 14¾.

Size: Women's medium (chest 38½" circumference at underarm); close fit.

Note: This sweater is knitted from the top down, starting with the two sleeve straps then picking up stitches for the front and back from the edges of the straps. The front and back are worked separately until the underarms, then joined, and the rest of the body is worked in the round, decreasing slightly at each side for waist shaping and increasing again for hips.

Finished size: Chest, 38.5"; waist, 34"; hips, 40".

It seems to me that teapots have feelings. So do spindles, fountain pens, and clothes. Handspun sweaters, saturated with days of spinning and carding, dyeing and knitting, might be the most sensitive of all. In fact, I am convinced that every day is brightened by the wearing of such a garment. So to promote general contentment—both mine and that of the people around me—I have been knitting a series of woolen shirts. They can be worn next to the skin, over a tank top, or under another sweater, depending on the temperature. Each is an experiment in simplicity, spun from local fleece, a pleasure to wear at any time of year.

This scoop-neck pullover is made from a Cormo-cross sheep named Panda, part of Kate Painter's Knaack Flock in Colfax, Washington (www.knaackflock.com). Kate kept Panda covered so the gray fleece was a dream to work with, almost spinning itself into a three-ply yarn that is spongy and soft and that turned mossy green in a yellow dye bath. I knitted the sweater from the top down—hours of stockinette bliss followed by the more concentrated pleasure of sleeves knitted in The Cloisters stitch, a compelling but uncomplicated lace pattern from Barbara Walker's *A Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns*. This sweater is positive thinking personified, and were I not so interested in an idea for the next one, I would make a dozen just like it.

The Cloisters pattern from *A Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns* by Barbara Walker (Pittsville, Wisconsin: Schoolhouse, 1998, 234–235). Reprinted with permission from Schoolhouse Press.

Multiple of 10 sts plus 3.



Sarah's intent with this sweater was to create a garment that she could live in—and she succeeded!



Rows 1, 3, and 5: (RS) K3 *p7, k3; rep from *.
Rows 2, 4, and 6: P3, *k7, p3; rep from *.
Row 7: K2, * yo, ssk, p5, k2tog, yo, k1; rep from * and end k1.
Row 8: P4, *k5, p5; rep from *, ending last repeat p4.
Row 9: K3, *yo, ssk, p3, k2tog, yo, k3; rep from *.
Row 10: P5, *k3, p7; rep from *, ending last repeat p5.
Row 11: K2, *(yo, ssk) twice, p1, (k2tog, yo) twice, k1; rep from * and end k1.
Row 12: P6, *k1, p9; rep from *, ending last repeat p6.
Row 13: K3, *yo, ssk, yo, sl1-k2tog-psso, yo, k2tog, yo, k3; rep from *.
Rows 14, 16, and 18: Purl.
Row 15: K4, *yo, ssk, k1, k2tog, yo, k5; rep from *, ending last repeat k4.
Row 17: K5, *yo, sl1-k2tog-psso, yo, k7; rep from *, ending last repeat k5.
Row 19: K3, *p3, (k1, p1, k1, p1, k1) in next st, then pass the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th sts on right-hand needle separately over the last st made; p3, k3; rep from *.
Row 20: P3, *k7, p3; rep from *.
Repeat rows 1–20.

Sleeve Straps

Make 2. Cast on 25 sts.
Row 1: K1, work 2 repeats of Cloisters pattern, k1.
Row 2: P1, work 2 repeats Cloisters pattern, p1. Repeat these two rows until straps are 4½" long. Put live sts (those that will later continue down the sleeves) onto a holder or string.

Back

Beginning at shoulder edge (where the live sts are) and, with circular needle and RS facing, pick up and knit 26 sts along edge of strap, cast on 46 sts across back for neck opening, pick up and knit 26 more from other sleeve strap = a total of 98 sts. Work back and forth on these 98 sts in St st until back measures 8½", or desired length to underarm, measuring from center of the strap. Put sts on a string or circular needle and hold them together with a rubber band.

Front

Pick up and knit 26 sts along edge of strap as for back. Work back and forth in St st for four rows.
Rows 5–22: Continuing in St st, increase one st at the neck edge every other row six times and then every row five times = total of 37 sts.

Repeat for other shoulder strap. Be sure that you are increasing at the neck edge—the increasing sides should point toward each other. You're making a curved neck.

Join Fronts

Knit 37 sts from right front, cast on 24 sts, knit 37 sts from left front (98 sts total). Knit in St st until front measures 8½" or same length as for back from the center of shoulder strap to underarm.

Join Front and Back

Cast on 9 sts at each underarm for ease. Place marker between 4th and 5th stitches of each underarm to mark sides. Knit in circular fashion until body is as long as you want it, increasing and decreasing for shaping as follows.

Knit straight for about 2". On every 7th rnd, decrease 1 st at each side of each marker 6 times (4 sts decreased on each dec rnd, 24 sts decreased total).

Knit straight for 2". Now, on every 6th rnd, increase one stitch on each side of each marker 7 times (28 sts inc) or as desired for your hip measurement and depending on how snug you want the bottom to be.

Knit until sweater is 21½" from center of shoulder strap, or as long as you want it to be. Bind off in St st for rolled edge.

Sleeves

With short circular needle, starting at the marker at underarm, pick up and knit 43 sts on one side of armhole, k2tog (joining last new st and first strap st), k23 sleeve strap sts from holder in pattern, k2tog (last strap st and first new armhole st). Pick up and knit 43 sts from other side of armhole = total of 111 sts.

Note: At this point, decide if you want to knit sleeves circularly or back and forth. It works either way.

The center 63 sts are worked in Cloisters lace pattern, and the 24 edge sts to begin with at each side are worked in reverse St st. Work straight for 1". Decrease one stitch at each edge (if worked back and forth; decrease 1 st on each side of marker if worked in the round) on every 7th row until all of the reverse St sts outside pattern have been eliminated or sleeve is desired length. Change to dpn when necessary. Bind off in pattern on bobble row.

Neck

With circular needle, pick up and knit 145 sts around neck. Join and knit around for 1". Bind off in St st for rolled neck.

Wash gently by hand and lay flat to dry. Wear every day. ⌘

Sarah Swett communes with teapots, knitting needles, spindles, and looms in Moscow, Idaho. You can visit her imaginary world at Sarah-Swett.com.

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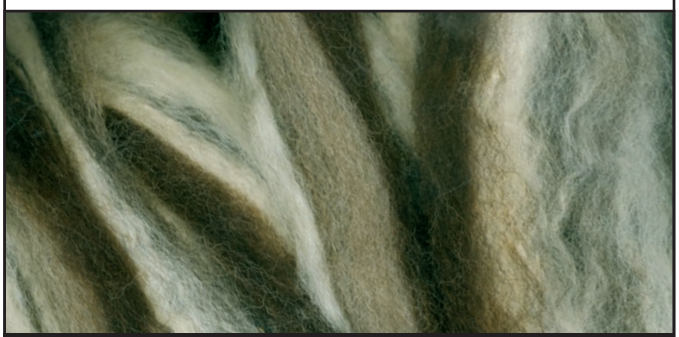
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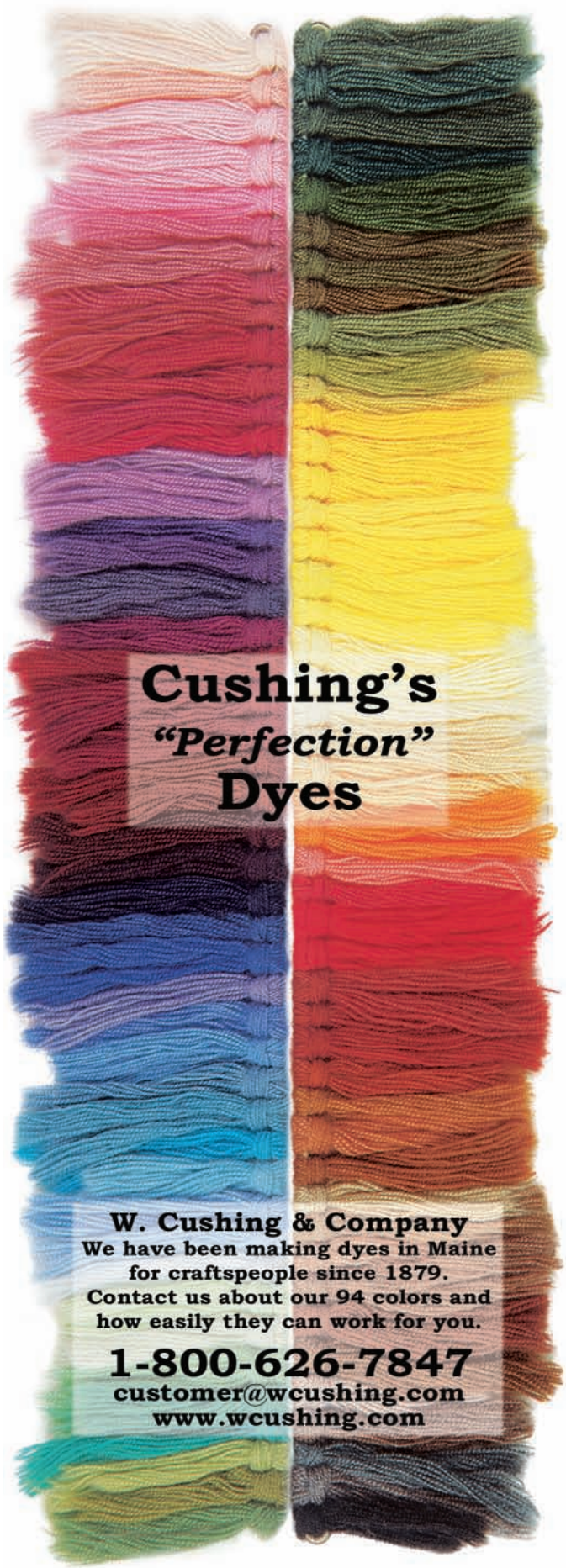
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Angela's Wedding Shawl

BY KAYE D. COLLINS



As a fifty-something mother of four grown, lovely, and talented daughters, I find my mind wandering and considering their lives away from home, their partners, and possibly their weddings. I have to admit I am not much of a fan of traditional church weddings; my husband of thirty-seven years and I eloped with only our neighbors as witnesses. Nevertheless I was greatly surprised when our daughter Angela and her terrific boyfriend, Brian, announced their engagement, and I found myself intrigued by the possibilities for the ceremony. Most of all, I saw this as an opportunity for me to make Angela a family heirloom.

The wedding and reception was set at our mountain property, one hour northwest of Fort Collins, Colorado, with a full year to plan and create. I spent most of the summer and early fall raking the pine needles and moving rocks to make paths and a clearing for the wedding site. During our many long phone calls, I told Angela I wanted to make her something for her wedding and asked, somewhat timidly, if she would like me to make her a shawl. Her answer, "I was thinking I would like to wear a shawl for the ceremony, and that would be perfect!"

I began by selecting the fibers I thought would best make a soft, lacy shawl that would also have good drape. Angela requested a sturdy shawl, not too fine or delicate, so she could wear it on other occasions, not just her wedding. The color was a consideration as many natural fibers are off-white and would look somewhat dingy against a pure white dress. My daughter chose a lovely ginger-colored douppioni silk fabric for her wedding dress, which I also made for her—but that is another story. Any shade of natural white would look good against the rich color of the fabric. Ultra-fine Merino and fine baby alpaca, either alone or blended with bombyx silk were the fibers I wanted to work with.

I began carding, spinning, and knitting small shawl-shaped samples. Through the years I have discovered that I *love* to sample. I can make a small sample in no time at all while learning so much about the fibers and my prospective project. Being somewhat

Project Notes

Fiber: 4–5 oz bombyx silk (includes extra for sampling), 5–6 oz raw fine baby alpaca (includes extra for sampling and loss after washing) for a 50/50 blend of ultra-fine baby alpaca and bombyx silk.

Preparation: Washed, picked, and carded raw alpaca.

Drafting method: Semiwoolen.

Wheel: Lendrum.

Wheel system: Scotch tension.

Ratio (singles/plying): 17:1.

Plied twists per inch: 5.

Plied wraps per inch: 28.

Total yardage: 1,500.

Yards per pound: 3,500.

Yarn classification: Sportweight.

Yardage used: 1,200.

Hook: U.S. 5 (1.7 mm) steel hook.

Needles: U.S. size 4 straight needles, or size needed for gauge. *Note:* When the number of stitches are too many for straight needles you may want to switch to a circular needle, continuing to work back and forth.

Gauge: 5 sts = 1" (in stockinette pattern), 7 sts = 2.5" (lace pattern after blocking), 10 rows = 3" (after blocking). *Note:* The shawl may stretch a few inches in length after being worn.

Notions: 190 rice-shaped freshwater pearls, size 4.5mm (from Fire Mountain Gems, www.firemountaingems.com); fine Japanese silk thread, number 100 weight, 200 m spool; fine beading needle that fits through the hole of the pearls.

Finished size: 52" by 88".

Finished weight: Shawl only, 5.4 oz; weight with pearls, 6.6 oz.

Pattern: Adapted from Diamond Knit Shawl, Lion Brand Yarns (www.lionbrand.com), pattern number 670, 14 repeats of a 10-row pattern.

Trim: Crocheted chain with shawl yarn and fine silk threaded with freshwater pearls.



compulsive, I sometimes just continue sampling; I find it so stimulating and satisfying that I don't always need to take it to the project phase. Everything is always perfect when it is still in your mind, and there are never any problems or redoes. For Angela's shawl, I made twelve samples using the three fibers, each alone and in various combinations; I knitted different shawl shapes and various lace patterns and then created a chart to allow Angela to comment on each aspect of the samples to come up with the final design.

Also, I included a few notes to further explain my questions and asked about the size and shape of the freshwater pearls I wanted to use in the trim. Deciding on the trim was easy; she liked the crocheted trim with white oblong (rice) pearls.

Angela had great things to say about each of the yarns and patterns, but the diamond pattern was her favorite. We both felt the triangular shawl was a good shape and could be worn over her shoulders making a lovely V in the back.

After starting the shawl with Merino/silk yarn only to discover, six repeats in, that the Merino seemed dingy compared to the silk, I turned the practice shawl into a scarf that I kept for myself and started over, asking myself, "What fibers do I most want to spin?" Alpaca is one of my favorite fibers, and I went through my stash to find a beautiful ultrafine baby alpaca that was extremely soft. I had been saving it for something special—maybe this was it!

I found that the silk blended well with the alpaca, having similar characteristics, strength, long staple, and lovely sheen. The crimp in the alpaca gave the yarn some body. Samples 11 and 12 were two blends of the silk and the ultrafine baby alpaca, 80/20 and 50/50. I was most impressed with the 50/50 blend, as the yarn was a lovely pearly white, very soft and silky, just scrumptious!

Making the Shawl

I washed the alpaca fiber a couple of times, after all it was from a baby's fleece (they tend to roll in the dirt, and sticks and debris get stuck in the tips), and blended it with bombyx silk by running it through my Patrick Green drumcarder with fur cloth a total of four times. Spinning and knitting the shawl was so delightful I really didn't want to stop. I bound off and lightly washed and blocked the shawl using blocking wires and T-pins. I was surprised it was so long but most of all, I was surprised that the shape of the V was so open (wide), not sharp as I expected. The length across the top was 88 inches, much wider than I had originally planned. As it turned out, the long ends at each side of the top were perfect for wearing the shawl in a variety of styles. Angela's favorite style was wrapping the shawl over her shoulders and bringing the ends behind her back and tying them together. This allowed the front of her dress to show, and the shawl stayed in place without constant adjustment while she moved around.

Two days before the wedding, we hiked the trail behind our cabin to show the groom's parents (newly arrived from Iowa) the wedding site as snow lightly fell on our heads. As I looked at their weak smiles, I said, "Trust me it will be nice weather for the wedding." Sure enough, June 9, 2007, was a picture-perfect day with sunny skies and temperatures in the mid-70s.

Adapted Diamond Knit Shawl pattern (I adapted the pattern for a smaller size yarn, changed the pattern repeats, size of the shawl, and rewrote the instructions so that they were clearer and easier to follow.).

(Multiple of 7 sts.)

Setup rows 1–10:

Row 1: (RS) K1, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, k2tog tbl (through the back loop), k1.

Row 2: (K1, p1) in first st, p across to last st, (p1, k1) in last st = 9 sts.

Row 3: K1, k2tog, yo, k3, yo, k2tog tbl, k1.



Angela and Brian's wedding on Kaye and Lee's mountain property in Colorado.



The Collins family—Missy, Celena, Brian, Angela, Kaye, Lee, Danton, and Heather.



Kaye's daughter Angela wrote a note to Kaye about the wedding dress and the sample form with the drawing of the dress. Kaye made twelve knitted samples and sent seven samples to Angela for her assessment.

Rows 4, 6, 8: Work as for Row 2.
Row 5: K1, (k2tog, yo) 2 times, k1, (yo, k2tog tbl) 2 times, k1 = 11 sts.
Row 7: K1, (k2tog, yo) 2 times, k3, (yo, k2tog tbl) 2 times, k1 = 13 sts.
Row 9: K1, (k2tog, yo) 3 times, k1, (yo, k2tog tbl) 3 times, k1 = 15 sts.
Row 10: (K1, p1, k1) into first st, p across to last st, (k1, p1, k1) into last st = 19 sts.

Pattern Rows:

Row 1: *K1, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, k2tog tbl, k6; repeat from *, ending last rep k1 instead of k6.
Rows 2, 4, 6, 8: (K1, p1) in first st, p across to last st, (p1, k1) in last st.
Row 3: *K1, k2tog, yo, k3, yo, k2tog tbl, k4; rep from *, ending last rep k1 instead of k4.
Row 5: *K1, (k2tog, yo) 2 times, k1, (yo, k2tog tbl) 2 times, k2; rep from *, ending last rep k1 instead of k2.
Row 7: *K1, (k2tog, yo) 2 times, k3, (yo, k2tog tbl) 2 times; rep from *, ending k1.
Row 9: K1, (k2tog, yo) 3 times, *k1, (yo, k2tog tbl) 2 times, yo, (sl 2 kwise-k1-p2sso), (yo, k2tog) 2 times, yo; rep from *, ending k1, (yo, k2tog tbl) 3 times, k1.
Row 10: (K1, p1, k1) into first st, p across to last st, (k1, p1, k1) into last st.

Rep Rows 1–10 for pattern.

Shawl: Cast on 7 sts, work set-up Rows 1–10, and then repeat pattern Rows 1–10 a total of 14 times or until top measures about 88" (when blocked). End on Row 10. Bind off as described below.

Chain Stitch Bind-Off

Switch to steel crochet hook, and work sts off the holding needle as follows.

Row 1: *Single crochet 3 sts together (from holding needle), chain 7; rep from * across the entire shawl edge.

Slip 190 pearls onto the silk thread; don't cut thread.

Note: Normally I make a beaded crocheted edge by threading the beads directly on the knitting yarn, but the holes in the pearls were too small for the needle and yarn to pass through, so I placed the pearls on a fine silk thread.

Row 2: Holding the silk thread and shawl yarn together, *chain 3 sts, slip 1 pearl up snuggly against chained sts, chain 1 st *with shawl yarn only,* pick up thread and *with yarn and thread held tog*, chain 3 sts, single crochet into the chained loop from previous row, ch 7 sts, single crochet into chained loop below; rep from * across shawl edge. Cut yarn, and thread and weave in ends neatly on WS. ⌘

Kaye Collins lives with her recently retired husband, Lee, in their geodesic-dome cabin in Cherokee Park, Colorado, while they are designing and building a new house big enough for the ever-growing family with hopes that friends will visit. Kaye would like to thank all her spinner friends and classmates who have given their comments on her samples and generously shared tips and treasured wedding stories.



Project Notes

Size: Women's small to medium, to fit head measurement of 20" to 23" (cap shown is size small).

Fiber: 100 g Polwarth combed top from Wendy Dennis, Tarndwarncoort.

Drafting method: Short forward draw.

Wheel: Ashford Joy.

Wheel system: Scotch tension.

Ratio (singles/plying): 8:1.

Singles direction spun: Z.

Singles wraps per inch: 28.

Plied direction spun: S.

Plied wraps per inch: 15.

Total yardage: 200.

Hook: U.S. size F (3.75mm) or U.S. size E (3.5mm).

Gauge: Fingering-weight yarn, 15 wraps per inch: 20 sts and 12 rows = 4" in double crochet.

Double knitting yarn, 12 wraps per inch: 16 sts and 9 rows = 4" in double crochet.

This pattern is written for two different sizes of yarn. Numbers in parentheses refer to instructions for fingering-weight yarn. Where only one number occurs, it refers to both gauges.

Notions: 24" (60 cm) of ⅝" wide (1 cm) satin ribbon.

Note: For a larger size, use heavier yarn or work two additional increase rounds before the first shell insertion (one extra rnd of dc before the second shell insertion and one rnd of dc before the tr rnd, for four extra rounds total).

Isobel

A crocheted cap

BY DIANE MULHOLLAND

I purchased a couple of packs of prepared Polwarth top at the Australian Sheep and Wool Show in Bendigo in 2006. One pack became socks fairly quickly, but I asked my mother to dye the other for me in a subtle mix of blues, greens, and mauves and then saved it for a special project.



Diane's mother dyed the Polwarth top in lovely shades of blue, green, and mauve—and Diane saved it for a special project.

Finally, I was inspired and spun a light and airy two-ply yarn on my Ashford Joy. Although spinning with a semiworsted drafting technique, I avoided smoothing the yarn too much with my forward hand, allowing air to be trapped between the fibers. After splitting the top lengthwise, I allowed the colors to follow one another randomly in the singles. The plied yarn is a wonderful mix of blue on blue, green on blue, mauve on green, and a wealth of other combinations.

While planning Isobel, I looked through many knitting stitch dictionaries before I realized that crochet would give me the perfect, subtly textured look that I wanted for this project. The hat worked up quickly, almost seeming to design itself, and it is now my favorite girlie accessory.



1) Polwarth locks from Tarndwarncoort, **2)** fingering-weight yarn, **3)** dyed Polwarth top, and **4)** crocheted cap.

Crown

To begin, ch 5, and join into a ring with a slip stitch.

Rnd 1: Ch 3 (counts as first dc here and throughout pattern), 9 dc into ring, sl st in top of 3 ch (= total of 10 sts).

Rnd 2: Ch 3, dc in same st, 2 dc in each stitch around; join (= 20 sts).

Rnd 3: Ch 3, 2 dc in next st, *dc in next st, 2 dc in next st; rep from * to end; join (= 30 sts).

Continue in this manner, increasing 10 sts evenly spaced around for 3 (5) more rnds, 60 (80) sts.

Next rnd: Work as for previous rounds but increase 12 sts evenly spaced around (= 72 [92] sts total).

Main Section

Rnd 1: Ch 3, 4 dc in next sp between two dc, *skip 4 dc, 5 dc in next sp; rep from * to end; join.

Rnd 2: Ch 3, 4 dc in space between first and last dc groups of previous rnd, 5 dc in each sp between groups of 4 dc to end; join.

Rnd 3: Ch 3, dc in each of next 3 dc, *skip 1 dc, dc in each of next 4 dc; rep from * to end; join (= 72 [92] sts).

Rnds 4–6: Ch 3, dc in each st around; join.

For double knitting yarn: Work Rnds 1–6 once more. On the next round, begin with ch 4 and then work 1 tr in each st around, 11 rnds total.

For fingering-weight yarn: Work 1 rnd, then work Rnd 2 twice, followed by Rnds 3–4. On the next rnd, begin with ch 4 and then work tr in each st around, 12 rnds total.

Edging

Next rnd: Ch 3, (4 tr, 1 dc) in next sp, *skip 4 dc, (1 dc, 4 tr, 1 dc) in next sp; rep from * to end; join and fasten off.

Flower

To begin, ch 20.

Row 1: Dc in fifth ch from hook, *ch 1, 1 dc in next ch; rep from * to end; turn.

Row 2: Ch 3, (4 tr, 1 dc) in next sp, *(1 dc, 4 tr, 1 dc) in next sp; rep from * to end; turn.

Row 3 (optional): *Sc in next st, ch 1; rep from * to end.

Fasten off; coil and secure flower shape using yarn ends.

Finishing

Measure and cut ribbon to length around head, allowing 1" overlap. Thread through last round before edging as shown and stitch ends together. Stitch flower in place, covering join in ribbon. Darn in all ends. ⌘

Diane Mulholland had the very good fortune to grow up on an Australian sheep farm, and a love of all things fiber-related was a natural result. A long way from home now, she tries her best to fit as much wool as possible into her tiny London flat. Read about what she's been up to at www.dianemulholland.com/blog.



Natural white Polwarth fleece.

Home of the Polwarth

A visit to Tarndwarncoort

BY DIANE MULHOLLAND

Tucked away off the beaten track, a little less than two hours' drive from Melbourne, Australia, you will find Tarndwarncoort, home of the Polwarth sheep and with a fascinating history spanning nearly two centuries.

In 1839, English farmer and miller, Alexander Dennis, sailed with his family to Australia and settled at Warncoort in western Victoria. The family imported Merino sheep from Tasmania but found that they suffered badly in the harsh, wet climate of their new home. Alexander's son, Richard Vinicomb Dennis, experimented with breeding programs to improve the success of the flock and eventually developed the Polwarth breed, a dual-purpose sheep of three-quarters Merino and one-quarter Lincoln.

Tarndwarncoort is still in the Dennis family, and seven generations later, Tarndwarncoort Polwarth Wool is under the expert management of David Dennis and his wife, Wendy. More than 120 years since the breed was established in 1880, the fleece is now world renowned, with a great demand for this soft, fine fiber. When I visited, I was immediately struck by the charm and beauty of the farmhouse and surroundings. Parts of the house date from the original 1840s homestead, and modern alterations have been made without touching the character of the building.

The adjoining wool room, however, was my real goal, and as Wendy showed me around, I could only gaze in wonder at the gorgeous colors and incredible fleeces piled everywhere. Luckily my husband was with me to remind me of the limits of our luggage, as I could easily have brought it all home. Products available include fleeces, millspun yarns, garments, hand-dyed and natural-colored fiber packs, and, for further temptation, a full range of Majacraft spinning equipment. Show ribbons hang everywhere, reminding the visitor of the elite export quality of the products of this small family business.

At Tarndwarncoort the emphasis is on quality, and this is immediately apparent upon examining the fleece. The sheep are coated year-round to protect from dust, mud, and seeds, and the fleece is beautifully clean with only the tiniest hint of weathering at the tip. Fiber diameter can be as low as 21 microns, second only to Merino in softness. For the handspinner, Polwarth is a dream fiber. The fiber is lovely to draft straight from the lock or from a prepared form. A worsted-style spinning



Tarndwarncoort Polwarth sheep are coated year-round to protect the fleece from dust and grass seeds.

PHOTOS BY DIANE MULHOLLAND





Clockwise from top left: The family farmhouse—part of the original building, in stunning local bluestone—is still visible. Wendy shares a new product—a beautiful natural gray Polwarth/silk blend yarn. The wool room is a treasure trove of yarns, fibers, and tools for spinners and knitters. The Dennis family is proud of their long history with Polwarth sheep.





technique is recommended and will yield a lustrous, lofty yarn perfect for next-to-the-skin garments or even baby wear.

Being lucky enough to have known Wendy for many years, I have tended to take Polwarth rather for granted in my spinning, and it is my first choice for any project where softness and joy of spinning are my goals. Now that I'm living on the other side of the world, I find it more difficult to come by, and I was thrilled to hear Wendy's plans for increasing export and sending Polwarth to more corners of the earth. "The sky's the limit, really," she says when I ask her about plans for the future of the business. As long as there are spinners and knitters wanting fine wools, there will always be a growing and changing market.

Wendy is not new to the role of promoting wool crafts, of course. For many years, she has been dedicated to informing and encouraging the international spinning community, most notably through her management of the International Back to Back Wool Challenge. You will also see Wendy and David at shows and rural events, chatting with customers and friends and sharing their passion for all things wool. ⌘

Diane Mulholland had the very good fortune to grow up on an Australian sheep farm and a love of all things fiber related was a natural result. A long way from home now, she tries her best to fit as much wool as possible into her tiny London flat. Read about what she's been up to at www.dianemulholland.com/blog.

Resources

Fournier, Nola, and Jane Fournier. *In Sheep's Clothing: A Handspinner's Guide to Wool.* Loveland, Colorado: Interweave Press, 1995.

Shull, Paula. "Fiber Basics: Polwarth: A Personal Experience." *Spin·Off* 19, 4 (Winter 1995), 42–45.

Tarndwarncoort Polwarth Wool, www.tarndwarncoort.com.

North American source for Dennis Polwarth rovings, www.rovings.com.



On Washing Fleece

BY JUDITH MACKENZIE MCCUIN

Bundled locks submerged in boiling water with Dawn dishwashing soap emerge clean with the lock structure preserved.

There are probably as many different methods of washing fleece as there are fleeces waiting to be washed! Over the years, I've experimented with a wide variety of methods and cleansers with varying degrees of success—and some real disasters as well. There were the rare-breed English Leicester locks that I managed to completely depigment and make into superwash by using the wrong pH (over 9) with too much heat, and the Romney fleece that beautifully felted into a solid circle (we have used it for many years as a Christmas

Just Off the Sheep

Don't mistake the expression "spun in the grease" as meaning spun just as it comes off the sheep, a mistake I made in my art-school-spinner stage. You do need to remove the suint by soaking the fleece in cold water, or the first time your garment is worn in the rain, it will act like a self-cleaning sheep, leaving you with dirty, greasy water running off the tips of your fingers!

wreath) after an accidental trip through the complete wash cycle in my top-loading washing machine.

My first job as a child in British Columbia when I was learning to spin was spreading the fleece for washing. I would spread the newly shorn fleeces out on the lilac hedge that separated the orchard from the pasture. The fleeces, shorn in early spring, would spend several weeks in late May and early June draped across the hedges, letting the early soft summer rains wash away the dirt and debris. These Coastal Salish fleeces were the perfect example of hybrid vigor and cross-cultural diffusion. The result of crossbreeding between Churro sheep left on the coastal islands by early Spanish explorers (as a safety net for shipwrecked sailors) and down breeds such as Dorset and Hampshire brought later by English settlers, the Coastal Salish sheep suited our climate perfectly. Beautifully colored, thanks to their Spanish ancestors, and with a robust, lively crimp structure from their English roots, these fleeces were used by First Nations spinners to produce the famous Cowichan sweaters (see Priscilla Gibson-Roberts's book, *Salish Indian Sweaters,* Dos Tejedoras Fiber Arts, 1989) and by my spinning teacher, Mrs. Axen, to make wonderfully lightweight, sturdy socks and mittens for the fishermen in our village.

Mrs. Axen's method of washing fleece is one that is tried and true. For many years, First Nations spinners have used a similar method. Fleeces were either stretched out along fence lines or placed in the fast-running creeks in burlap sacks weighted with rocks. This method of washing removes suint, the oil that sheep produce to clean themselves but leaves the natural lanolin in place. Leaving in the lanolin, the oil that keeps water from penetrating the fleece on the sheep's back, helps the sweaters and toques made from the "spun-in-the-grease" yarn stay remarkably water resistant in the damp coastal climate of British Columbia.

WOOL: THE SELF-CLEANING FIBER

To understand how to clean wool, it is helpful to understand a bit about the nature of fleece and how it is produced.

Wool comes from a follicle, just like human hair. In the bulb of the follicle, wool cells split and divide, forcing the liquid wool protein (keratin) to move up the long, narrow shaft of the tube.

In addition to the coating of lanolin that happens during the passage through the tube of the follicle, wool is coated with a substance called suint. Secreted from a gland similar to a sweat gland, suint is applied just before the fiber exits the skin. Suint is liquid at skin temperature and hardens as it moves up the shaft of the fiber, away from the sheep's body heat. Like soaps and detergents, which are made from either sodium or potassium salts, the chemical composition of suint is primarily potassium salts, making suint a natural detergent. Unlike lanolin, suint is water soluble. Like all other soaps and detergents, suint naturally attracts dirt and surrounds it, moving the dirt up the wool shaft by osmosis toward the tips of the fleece. When it rains, sheep become self-cleaning. The rain activates the soapy qualities of the suint in the tips of the fleece and washes away much of the dirt.

I think it is always a good idea to remove the suint before more serious washing (scouring) takes place. It is simple to do. Place the fleece you want to wash in cold water and let it sit for a day or two. This will dissolve the suint—it is water soluble without the need of soap or detergents—allowing it to release much of the dirt from the fibers so that it can be easily rinsed away.

There are many pioneer stories about driving flocks of sheep through creeks or rivers a few days before shearing to clean the fleeces so that they would bring a better price.

Clean wool lengthens considerably when it's wet and retains much of that increase in length after the fiber dries. This is especially true for fine, high crimp fibers such as Polwarth, Rambouillet, and Merino. This is one good reason to wash before combing; the added length makes it much easier to comb.

FERMENTED SUINT CLEANSER

For a number of years, I had a small handspun yarn company, using a mix of Romney and Dorset fleeces to make knitting and weaving yarns. Processing about a hundred pounds of fleece a month in my studio, I wanted a washing method that was efficient, effective, and as environmentally sound as possible. I used a method developed in New Zealand that makes use of suint as a cleanser.

This method is best done outside and far from your neighbors; it does smell foul but the smell washes right out of the wool. This method has the lowest environmental impact (minimal water use, no chemicals, and the wash water is good for gardens or compost boxes) of any method I've used. Its main drawbacks are that it smells terrible while you are using it, it takes time to get the process started, and while it works wonderfully on many types of fleeces, it doesn't completely scour out fleeces with high-lanolin content. It also requires a soft-water supply.





Preserve the lock structure and wash more locks at a time by placing the locks in a cloth envelope in a roasting pan and simmering them with a small amount of liquid detergent.

To set up the bath, take any dirty fleece, preferably something with a high-grease weight and soak it in a big tub of water (plastic storage bins or garbage pails work well) for five to seven days. Keep it warm—at room temperature if possible. The wash water will start to ferment; it will smell bad and sometimes a slight white film will occur. Remove the fleece, rinse, and give it a quick wash in hot, soapy water; rinse in clear water.

Put the fleece you want to wash directly into the dirty water. Let it sit until the fleece, when rinsed, is clean—usually two days. Rinse well in cold water and dry.

This works well for luster longwools like Lincoln and Romney or primitive breeds like Shetland, Icelandic, and Finnsheep. I've also used it successfully with Down breeds like Dorset and Oxford Downs. It is a great prewash for high-grease fleeces like Merino, Cormo, and Rambouillet. Use the fermented water over and over; the more you use it, the better it gets. Don't worry that it looks dirty—use the water until, as they say in Montana, it is too thick to swim in and too thin to plow. You shouldn't have to rewash the fleece out of this fermented bath, but if it still has a little wool grease, a quick wash in a weak detergent bath should take care of it easily.

SCOURING WOOL

Scouring means removing all waxes, oils (including carding oils and industrial grease), dirt, and other contaminants from the fleece. It is necessary to completely scour the fleece when you are sending your wool out to be custom processed. This will help it pass through the machinery with very little damage to either the machinery or the fiber. It is also essential to scour before dyeing to make sure the dye can attach properly to the fiber and that the water-carried dye can be distributed evenly.

To scour fleece rather than simply wash it, you need either soap and really high temperatures or a detergent and more moderate temperatures. If you decide to use soap, two things are important: make sure you are using soft water, and rinse with the same high temperature that you washed in.

THE CLEANSERS: SOAPS AND DETERGENTS

Most of us use the words soap and detergent somewhat interchangeably, but there is a difference in what they are, what they do, and the effect they have on your fleece. Both are surfactants (surface active agents)—they change the surface tension of the water, preventing it from beading up, which inhibits the wetting process. Essentially, soaps and detergents make water feel wetter. Grease and oil naturally attract dirt but are not water soluble. Soaps and detergents emulsify the oil and grease. By doing so, they encapsulate the dirt and contaminants so that they can be rinsed away.

Soaps are either water-soluble sodium salts (hard soaps) or water-soluble potassium salts (soft soaps). They are derived from fats and/or oils by treating them with a strong alkali, usually caustic soda. There really isn't a soap that is truly neutral, but soap can have a fairly low pH (about 7).

Soaps are the gentlest of cleansers; they are also relatively cheap to produce and are made from renewable resources. Soaps are biodegradable as they

pH scale

The pH scale measures how acidic or basic (alkaline) a substance is. The scale is from 0 to 14; 7 is neutral.

Concentration of hydrogen ions compared to distilled water

Acid	10,000,000 = pH 0	battery acid
	100,000 = pH 2	lemon juice
	10 = pH 6	milk
Neutral	1 = pH 7	pure water
	.01 = pH 9	baking soda
	.0001 = pH 11	ammonia
Alkaline	.0000001 = pH 14	lye

are easily broken down by bacteria. The drawback to soaps is that they work in a relatively narrow range of water quality. Soaps don't work at all in an acidic solution, and if the water is too hard, soap's efficiency is greatly reduced. In hard water, soaps react and form an insoluble precipitate with a variety of mineral salts—in particular, calcium, magnesium, and iron—that can't be washed away. We often see this precipitate as soap scum or film; it is what (bonded with calcium) forms the ring in the bathtub. These precipitates are responsible for making the colors in textiles dull, causing whites to turn gray and cloth to become hard and stiff. When washing fleece, the insoluble soap film makes a fleece discolored and hard. Once the precipitate has formed, it becomes sticky and difficult to remove. The bonding between soap and these other chemicals also means that more soap must be used to replace the soap that is bound up in the precipitate. Remember, even if you use very soft water, dirt contains both calcium and magnesium so some precipitation is always present when you use soap to wash fleece.

It was to solve these problems that detergents were developed. We have made soaps since early history, but detergents, especially synthetic detergents, are modern, developed in the 1900s. A detergent is simply soap with any number and type of additives (called builders in the soap world). Builders make soap work better. They allow it to work in a much greater range of water types and prevent the formation of insoluble precipitates in hard water.

Beware! Some detergents use an enzyme additive to remove protein stains like grease and blood. These enzymes attack protein and are not safe to use with any protein fibers like silk or wool.

The most commonly used additives are synthetic surfactants and degreasers that actively pull away grease and dirt, suspending it in water until it can be washed away. These additives allow detergents to be used at much lower temperatures than soaps and require less water to rinse.

The drawbacks to detergents are that they often make the soap even more alkaline, putting wool protein (keratin) specifically at risk. And while there are a growing number of plant-based surfactants, synthetic surfactants are the ones most commonly used to make detergents. Synthetic surfactants are entirely produced in chemical factories. They are manufactured from propylene, a waste product of the petroleum industry. Another concern is that detergents often (but not always) use phosphates in their chemical mix that can be a water-quality concern.

SCOURING

Depending on the type of fleece that I am going to scour and how I'm going to process it, I scour fleece in a variety of ways.

I usually soak everything before I wash it; I use a couple of 5-gallon pails or a plastic garbage pail to soak the fiber in. This allows the natural soaplike character of the suint to start loosening the dirt before I start the scouring process. Also, well-saturated fiber is easier to clean as the fibers lengthen and straighten as they take up water, making them shed dirt more easily. I remove the soaked fleece and spin all the dirty water out of it using the spin cycle of my top-loading washing machine.

IN THE WASHER

For fleece that is going to a commercial processor or that I am going to dye and then drumcard myself, I wash it in a top-loading washing machine. I fill the machine with water as hot as possible and add enough detergent to make the water feel slippery. I use Dawn dishwashing soap, a detergent with a pH between 7 and 9 (most good detergents will have a telephone number on the label for questions about the product) that contains a good degreaser but is still gentle enough to not harm my wool. My water has a fair amount of calcium, and I use about ¼ cup of detergent for each load. Depending on the fleece type and how dirty it is, I add between 3 and 5 pounds of fleece per load. For robust or highly crimped fleeces like Merino, I turn on the agitator for a minute or two. I don't agitate long, silky fleeces ever (well, not on purpose!). Then, I just let the fleece sit until the water is cool, an hour or two. If it can be agitated, I'll turn on the agitator once or twice for a minute while it is cooling. I turn the machine to the spin cycle and spin out the dirty water. I fill the machine with cold water and rinse the fleece out. If the fleece still has a bit of grease left in it or the tub has a lot of dirt left on the sides after the spin cycle, I'll wash it again. Usually this method cleans in two washes but I have had some high-grease fleeces that required a third wash.

Some washing machines introduce water during a portion of the spin cycle. To make sure that doesn't happen when you are washing wool, turn off the water before you spin out the fleece.

I wash fleeces that I am going to hand process

quite differently. For special projects in which the fleece is going to be combed or flicked to prepare it for spinning, the locks need to be stapled—put in bundles of the same length and crimp style. They also need to be kept in order, straight and all lying in the same direction. I've used a number of different methods and they all work well. I choose one method over the other simply based on the number of locks I need to wash.

LOCK BY LOCK

My favorite method is one I learned from Margaret Stove, the incredible lace knitter from New Zealand. In this method, each lock is washed and rinsed one at a time, keeping every fiber in perfect order. If you are planning to spin cobweb lace and will only need a few locks, this is a good choice.

Besides stapled locks, you'll need a bar of soap, preferably Sunlight or Fels-Naptha. If you are lucky enough to have a Mexican grocery near you, you can often find bars of dark brown general-purpose household soap—these are great for fleece washing. If you can't find one of these, a bar of any hard hand soap will work.

Run the tap water until it is as hot as your hands can stand. Hold a lock by the tip in one hand, the bar of soap in the other. Run the water over the bar of soap, and rub the cut end of the lock on the bar of soap. Reverse and hold it by the cut end; rub it vigorously against the bar of soap. Rinse the lock by holding it by the tip under the running water until it is free of soap. Lay it on a towel—remember to place the locks so that the tips are all together, cut ends going in the opposite direction. When the locks are damp-dry, they are ready to be flicked out and spun.

BUNDLED LOCKS

I developed this method for washing more locks at the same time with a similar end result. Originally, I used a cup and boiling water, then graduated to mass production by using a Crock-Pot. I staple out the fleece, bundling ten to fifteen locks and tying them together tightly with a length of cotton yarn. I put a squirt of my favorite detergent in the bottom of the container, then place the bundles dirty tips down, cramming the container so that the staples remain upright. Add water (boiling, if you are not using a Crock-Pot) until it covers the cut ends of the locks. If you are using a Crock-Pot, turn it on low and let it simmer several hours. Let the locks sit until they are cool. Take the bundles out and gently squeeze out the dirty water, one bundle at a time. Hold the bundle under running hot water until it is well rinsed. Lay on a towel to dry.

ROASTING PAN

Like every craftsperson, I'm always looking for a simpler way that will give me the same good results. Tying—and untying—the bundles takes a bit of time. I found that I get a similar result—beautifully clean fleece in proper combing order—with this method. Find a roasting or lasagna pan that can be used on the top of the stove. Cut a piece of white cotton sheeting about three times bigger than the pan. Put a squirt or two of detergent in the pan and lay the cloth in the pan so that one-third hangs over each side. Lay the stapled locks in the pan in rows. Fold over the extra cloth so the locks are secure within the cloth envelope. Add hot water until it covers the cloth. Be sure that all of the cloth is safely in the pan and not close to flames or burners. Put it on the stove and bring it to a gentle simmer for about 20 minutes. Let it cool and then roll the envelope into a tube shape, pressing out all the dirty water. Add cool clean water and detergent to the pan, add the envelope, and repeat the process. Repeat the process again, this time without detergent. When it is cool enough to handle, roll it into a tube shape again and wrap it in a bath towel. If you have a top-loading washing machine, place the envelope in a nylon bag so the locks don't all fall out, and spin it out on the spin cycle; if you don't, stand on the towel in the shower or bathtub and squeeze all the excess water out. Unwrap and let the envelope become fairly dry before you open it. All the locks will be clean and in perfect order, ready to comb or spin. Remember to check the pH before you use this much heat—this is how I accidentally "superwashed" the Leicester locks. I used a commercial wool scour without checking the pH level.

No matter what method you decide to use, pay attention to the end results. There are many ways to make sure a fleece is perfectly clean; Tide detergent or washing soda can clean a fleece perfectly well but can often cause damage to wool. Here is a checklist to help you tell if your washing method is harmful to your fiber: first, the hand becomes harsh; in the next stage, the luster disappears, and finally, the fiber becomes tender. If any of these have happened to your fleece, it is not a problem with the fleece but with the washing method, and it just might be time, try a new way of washing your fleece. ⌘

Judith MacKenzie McCuin of Creston, Washington, has been a textile artist for over thirty years. Her love of textiles has led to many fascinating jobs, including leading a National Research Council grant to investigate industrial silk dyes and the repair of the king of Afghanistan's carpet. Her latest book, *The Intentional Spinner,* will be available in November from Interweave.

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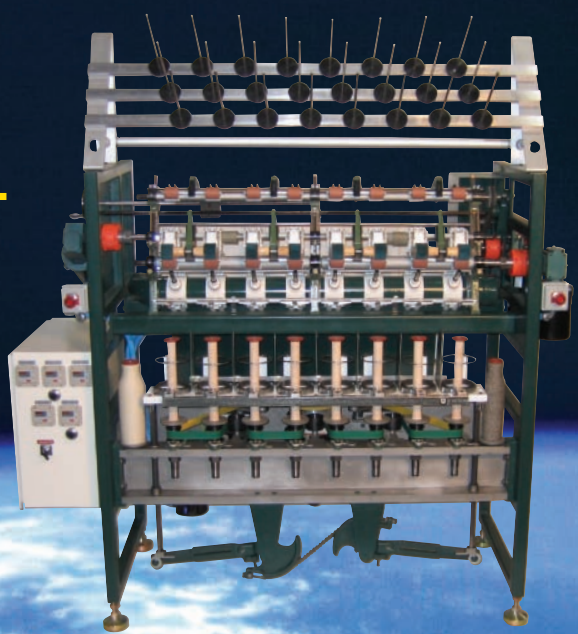
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Abi Yangsom spins with my *phang*, taking a break from cracking apricot hulls on the roof in Skurbuchan.

Photos by Tracy Hudson unless otherwise noted



Spinning in the Himalayas

BY TRACY HUDSON

"**It must be very warm** in your country." People in Ladakh have said that to me too often to count. Never mind that I'm from the midwestern United States, where ice storms and freezing winds are the winter norm. Never mind that the Ladakhis' own country is actually India, considered by most to be a very warm country, indeed. No, the persistent view is that no place else on earth is as cold as Ladakh. For the Ladakhis, it's the defining characteristic of their home. With Ladakhi villages lying between 10,000 and 15,000 feet of elevation, this point of view is most justified in winter, when they can be indefinitely cut off from the outside world by ice and snow.

SHEEP

Due to the pervasive cold and the need for self-sufficiency, wool plays a central role in the lives of Ladakhis. The raising of sheep and the processing of their wool into fabric is an essential part of local knowledge and custom. (The traditions I refer to throughout this article are practiced in western Ladakh. There are some regional differences in other parts of Ladakh, such as Zangskar and the Chang Tang Plateau.) Generally, people know how to shear their own sheep, but there are a few men who specialize and can be called upon for shearing. The shearer will come to the house with iron shears like large scissors, sit with the sheep in his lap (Ladakhi sheep are quite small) and spend 20 to 30 minutes snipping the fleece and chatting with the family; then he'll have a cup of tea and go. No money changes hands. The sheep are a mixed breed, known by color rather than breed, and no one controls the breeding of sheep. As long as their sheep survive and reproduce, the farmers are happy. The quality of the village wool shocked me with its short staple length, second cuts, and all kinds of bits that would be discarded at a commercial wool farm back home. I remember thinking, "You could never sell this stuff in the West." Yet the Ladakhi women impressively spin every last scrap of it into sturdy, usable yarn for weaving.

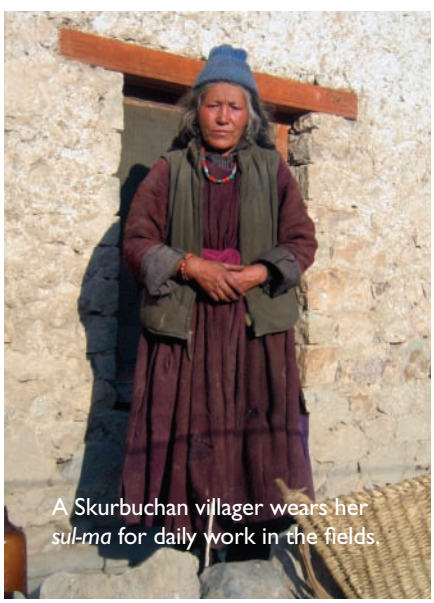


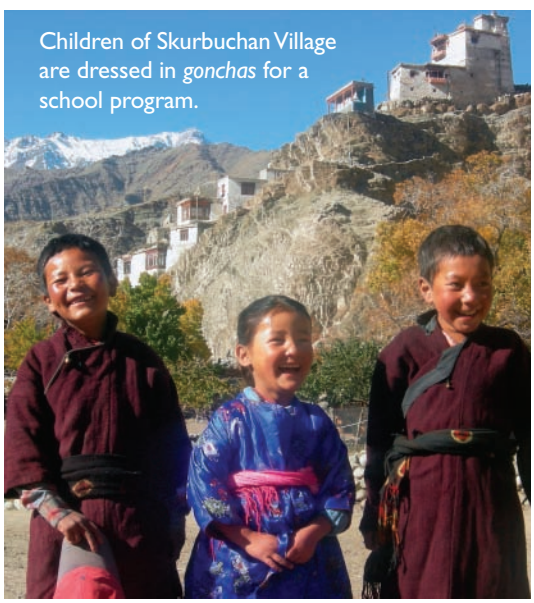
ILLUSTRATION BY ANN SABIN SWANSON

SPINNING

The Ladakhi supported spindle, the *phang*, is carved from a single piece of willow wood in an extended ellipse. There is no whorl, and the phang is spun in a small cup *(phang-kor)*. The spinner spins the phang with her right hand, lightly holding it upright as it spins. She simultaneously drafts the fiber with her left hand. I was immediately fascinated by this spindle and technique because I'd never seen documentation of a supported, whorl-less spindle used for regular sheep's wool anywhere else. I was determined to learn, but found the one-handed long draw awkward and challenging. Although I felt extremely unskilled every time I spun the phang, my tutors encouraged me, impressed that I could get twist into the wool at all, and so I kept trying.

Ladakhi women learn how to spin at a very young age, and their spinning looks fluid and effortless. Women do all the spinning of sheep's wool for clothing. Ladakhi men spin goat and yak hair on a drop spindle called a *skuru*. This yarn is made into densely woven bags for storage and transport, as well as heavy blankets and mats. There is less demand for the men's yarn, so not all men are practiced spinners. During winter months, families gather, and the sound of the whirring phang is a constant sound in the background. Sonam Palmo recalled all-night spinning parties during her childhood, where the women would chat and sing and eat good food while spinning. Angmo described being allowed to try spinning for weft at age six or seven. Her grandmother would correct the mistakes she made, draft-


A Skurbuchan villager wears her *sul-ma* for daily work in the fields.


Children of Skurbuchan Village are dressed in *gonchas* for a school program.


Ama Phuntsog uses carders for short-staple wool.

ing out the slubs, and then the yarn could be used. (This technique was also applied to my efforts to spin with the phang: Sonam Lhamo efficiently corrected my poorly spun yarn, so that none went to waste.)

HANDSPUN, HANDWOVEN GARMENTS

The traditional garment of Ladakh is a handspun woolen robe, or *gonchas*. The married women's style *(sul-ma)* is more of a dress, with a full skirt pleated at the waist. An adult gonchas requires about 9 pounds of wool, spun into warp and weft and woven into twill fabric strips about 1 foot wide. The woven fabric is called *nambu*, and a length of 35 cubits (measured from the elbow to the fingertips) is a complete nambu, sufficient for one gonchas. Angmo spun her first entire nambu when she was twelve years old and had it made into a gonchas for her grandfather.

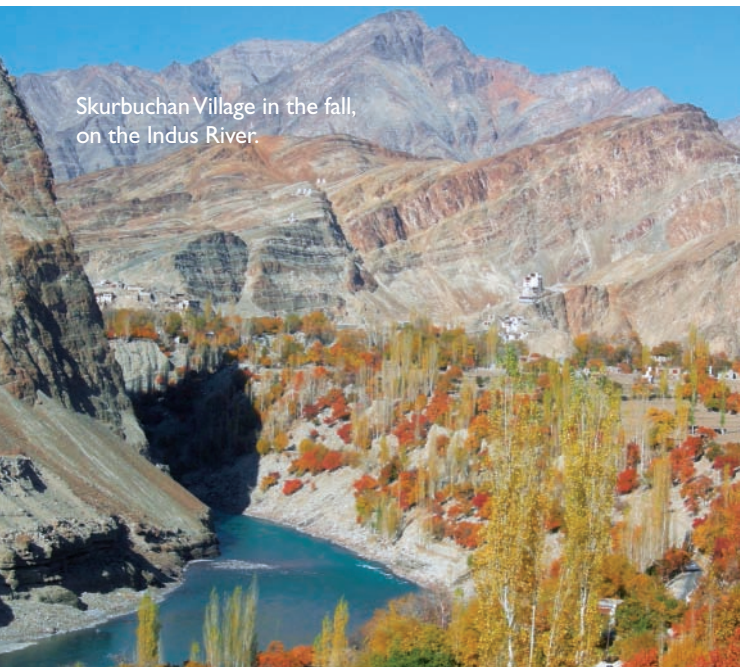
When I ask Ladakhi women how much they spin, they always respond in terms of how many nambu they make. In the past, when gonchas were the only option for winter wear, they used to provide multiple nambu for their various family members every year. Nowadays, women produce enough for one or two nambu per year. To my surprise, they never include spinning for knitting in their tally, although handspun knitwear is ubiquitous during winter in Ladakh. Regardless of how many knitted hats, sweaters, or socks they've spun, they don't bother to count such spinning—apparently, spinning for knitting is extra.



Ladakhi supported spindle *(phang)* and its cup *(phang-kor)*.

Granted, spinning for knitting is easier, since knitting yarn can be loftier and less perfect than weaving yarn. Particular skill and care is applied to the spinning of warp yarn because the warp must be strong and consistent. Many of the spinners I met prepare wool for warp by a meticulous, hand-picking process. Small bits of wool are gently pulled from one hand to the other, extending the fibers to their full staple length and lining them up parallel to one another. In some cases, this process creates a worsted preparation, leading to a very strong yarn fit for the warp. In other instances, the preparation is merely convenient in the absence of carders, as when Abi Yangsom worked with my phang briefly.

Knitting yarn is often used without plying; two singles are simply held together. Weaving yarn is always plied, and the plying technique is fascinating to watch. A tall pole supports six hooks on a frame directly above the spinner, who sits at another frame with six small metal loops to guide the yarn. Double-stranded yarn goes from one bottom-whorl spindle up over the hooks and down to a second spindle, and both are spun vigorously and simultaneously counterclockwise. When the plying twist fills the space between loops, the yarn is wound on, and a new stretch of yarn is set spinning. The frame has six hooks, which means six spindles are all moving at once, periodically invigorated with a grasp and thrust between two flat palms. This method is often demonstrated for tourists in Ladakh, since it is more dramatic than phang spinning. *(See Tracy's videos of Ladakhi spinning and plying methods at spinoffmagazine.com.)*



Skurbuchan Village in the fall, on the Indus River.

WEAVING AND SEWING

Most of the weaving of nambu is done by men on four-harness floor looms set up outdoors. After plying, the spinner delivers balls of warp and weft yarn to the weaver. After weaving, the nambu is washed and fulled by the spinner. In a stream or a tub of water, she stomps on it all day long, until it has shrunk 4 to 5 inches in width. Then

it is ready for dyeing. White wool is usually dyed dark red, and dark wool is dyed black. Ladakhis were adept with natural dyes in the past, but now they more frequently buy synthetic dyes from the market. After dyeing, the nambu is taken to the tailor who sews the gonchas. Sewing is done by men and women alike.

The gonchas tailor I visited in Skurbuchan, a large village in western Ladakh, had more than enough work to keep her busy until the Ladakhi New Year *(Losar)*. Rolls of nambu were piled high against one wall of her work space, and her handcrank sewing machine sat near the window with a half-stitched sul-ma. She had so many gonchas on order that she couldn't possibly sew up the nambu I'd bought, and I had to take it to a tailor in Leh, the capital town. I took this as a sign that, although there are more choices of warm clothing available now in Ladakh, the people in the villages continue to value their woolen robes. I also experienced the superior warmth and comfort of a handspun sul-ma when huddled around the stove on a December night. There was no more appropriate garment for sitting in Angmo's winter kitchen and knitting, while she sang Ladakhi folk songs and boiled butter tea over the dung-fueled fire. ⌘



Tracy practices spinning with a *phang*, at home in Doha.

PHOTO BY PATRICK MURPHY

Tracy Hudson has been paying close attention to textiles since 1990, the year she started quilting, dyeing fabric, and working for an import shop in Kansas City. Since then, living for many years in Asia has given her the chance to see traditional textile production in various intriguing settings and to collect wonderful samples from India, Afghanistan, Thailand, Laos, and Japan.

She learned how to knit in Ladakh in 2004 and later in the United States, learned to spin. Tracy and her husband, Patrick, currently live in Doha, Qatar. The desert climate has inspired a new interest: solar dyeing. Look for Tracy on Ravelry (www.ravelry.com) as himalaya, where she posts liberally about all her pursuits.



The tall frame used for plying yarns: six hooks above and eyeholes at Ane Phuntsog's waist level. Someone else passes the yarn over the hooks with the stick seen at left.



A man carves *phang* (supported spindles) for sale in the market while also selling dried apricots and nuts.



Two-stranded balls of weaving yarn.



Apo Tankar of Skurbuchan spins goat hair on the *skuru*, the men's drop spindle.



Apo Tankar shears an adult sheep.



White Mahogany, a type A doe, from Hawks Mountain Ranch.
LISA ROSKOPF

Pygora

BY CAROL HUEBSCHER RHOADES

It is surprising how little has been written about Pygora goats and their fiber. Pygora is not prominently displayed at fiber shows or found in many spinners' fiber stashes. Yet what I've seen and bought at shows is beautifully prepared, soft, often lustrous, and always elegant. It shares qualities with mohair and cashmere but is different from either of those luxury fibers.

HISTORY

The Pygora breed of goat is the result of cross-breeding between registered Angora and Pygmy goats. Katherine Jorgenson produced the original crosses in Oregon during the 1970s to obtain a fiber with a mix of the long, lustrous mohair of Angora goats and the soft, downy undercoat of Pygmy goats. The Pygora Breeders Association was established in 1987. Registered Pygoras must come from registered parents, with no more than 75 percent of the genetics from one parent breed.

CHARACTERISTICS

Pygora goats are small, with does weighing 65 to 75 pounds and bucks, 75 to 85 pounds. Does must be at least 18 inches high and bucks, 23 inches. Pygoras can be horned but may be disbudded at an early age. They are lively, curious, and hardy herd animals. As there is a difference in size between the parent breeds, care must be taken when selecting breeding stock to ensure that the does do not produce large kids that may cause problems during birthing. Pygoras can be milked and produce about a quart a day.

While many fiber-bearing animals produce somewhat varying fiber qualities on an animal and within a breed, Pygoras are exceptional with three distinct fleece types. The Pygora Breeders Association (www.pba-pygora.com) defines each type as follows:

- Type A: (Angora type)—A long, lustrous fiber averaging 6 or more inches in length, hanging in long, curly locks. The hair coat is not obvious on a type A animal. This fiber is very fine mohair. Some type A, F1 (F1 means first generation) Pygoras are



Pygora fleece comes in many lovely colors.



Brownie, a type B doe, at Hawks Mountain Ranch.



single coated. These animals must be shorn.

• Type B: (Blend type)—A blend of the Pygmy goat undercoat, which is cashmere, and the longer Angora mohair. It is 3 to 6 inches long, and it has a nice crimp (curl). The second coat is usually obscured by the longer coat. Type B can either be lustrous (shiny) or have a matte (dull) finish. This fleece type is the most common, and these goats may be shorn, combed, or plucked.

• Type C: (Cashmere type)—A very fine fiber, with no luster, and length of 1 to 3 inches. The hair coat looks very coarse in comparison to the two types above. Type C can be acceptable commercial cashmere. These goats may be shorn or combed.

The colors of the Pygmy goat are influential in determining Pygora goat colors. The fleeces can be white, grays to black, or tan to dark brown. There are many possible combinations of color and markings (see the breed association website for a detailed list). The variety of shades makes for lovely nuances of color in the spun yarn. As you can see from the description of the three types, the amount of luster in the fiber also varies. Type A Pygoras are usually shorn twice a year as are Angora goats; combing or plucking of types B and C is normally done once a year. The fiber yield from an animal varies from 6 ounces to 2 pounds, but there will be loss during dehairing and processing. Because most pygora fiber is commercially dehaired and processed, you can expect to pay at least $10 to $15 per ounce.

CHOOSING AND PREPARING PYGORA

With three types of fiber to choose from, it pays to become familiar with the characteristics of each type so you can choose the one best suited to your end product. Bear in mind two recommendations: (1) do not buy buck hair (you'll know why once you smell it), and (2) buy dehaired fiber unless you have a particular purpose in mind that requires a hairier yarn. It's really not worth trying to dehair by hand, no matter how cheap the fiber was. There are a range of hair types in pygora, and you could drive yourself crazy trying to remove all but the finest ones. The other problem is that the hairs can easily get into the air around you. If you decide to buy a fleece with a full range of fiber qualities, work outside. That said, type A fiber is longer and can easily be prepared by combing or carding. Flick carding should remove most of any coarser fibers. All of the producers I bought from sell commercially dehaired and prepared fiber. Usually the preparation is a carded batt (cloud) or roving, both very easy to spin from. I also recommend buying prepared fiber to use as a base for blending. If you do acquire raw fiber, wash it very gently to prevent felting. If you card the fibers (either by hand or on a drumcarder), try working on a humid day so that the fibers don't accumulate too much static. When handcarding, roll the rolags tightly; otherwise, they will relax and you could end up with batts rather than rolags. Lay the rolags in a long, smooth box and don't layer too high—the lower layers will quickly become squashed. Even with dehaired fiber, you might want to card or comb outside if possible or cover your work area with a sheet to pick up the stray fibers. If working inside, vacuum the work area frequently.

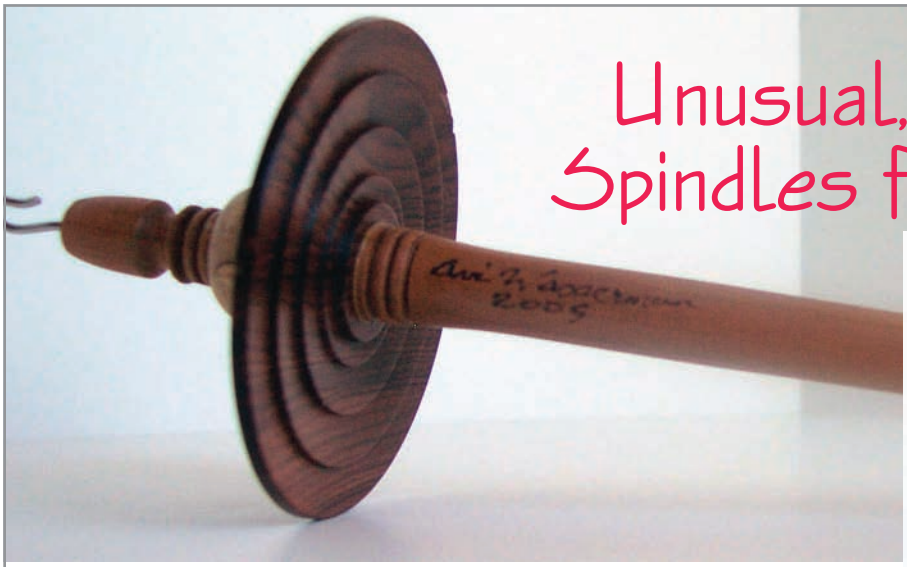


Samples of raw fiber donated by Rainbow Yarns Northwest. **1.** Type A. **2.** Type B. **3.** Type C.

SPINNING PYGORA

I have to admit that I was almost afraid to spin the pygora, lovely and tempting as it was. When I finally managed to work on my samples, I quickly realized that the fiber had hidden qualities. I don't think I've ever come across a fiber that differed so much from stage to stage in the process of becoming yarn. The rovings and clouds were lovely, light, and luxurious; during spinning, the various hair qualities became evident; the yarns felt flat but came to life when knitted or crocheted. I could hardly be-

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lieve how the yarns went from flat to plush and luxurious when worked. The softness of the rovings, seemingly lost in the spinning, was restored in the finished fabric.

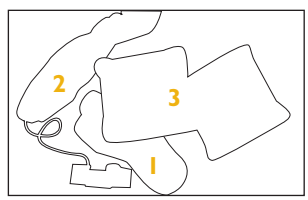
No matter how I prepared the fiber or how fine the original fiber was, the pygora had just enough length and crimp to spin easily without too much twist. Nevertheless, there is enough slickness that you have to be careful—test the twist every now and again to be sure the fibers don't slide away from each other if you tug gently on the singles. The crimp in the finer pygora is also not elastic. If your project needs some memory in the yarn, then blending with as little as 10 percent Merino or other very elastic fiber will improve the wearability of the item.

In all my sampling, I found that the yarn really bloomed when worked into fabric. This is a case where sampling from beginning to finishing is very important. If you don't, you could find that you have to make major adjustments to a pattern because your gauge is off, maybe even way off. For instance, my three-ply, type C yarn was similar in diameter to a wool/silk I had used for wrist warmers knitted on U.S. size 0 needles. However, I quickly found that I had to use U.S. size 2 needles for the pygora wrist warmers and could even have gone up to size 3. The finished fabric ended up much thicker than I would ever have guessed possible from looking at the yarn.

In general, spinning a fine singles and plying for the right yarn diameter is better than spinning fat pygora singles for fewer plies (the same rule that generally applies to any fine fiber).

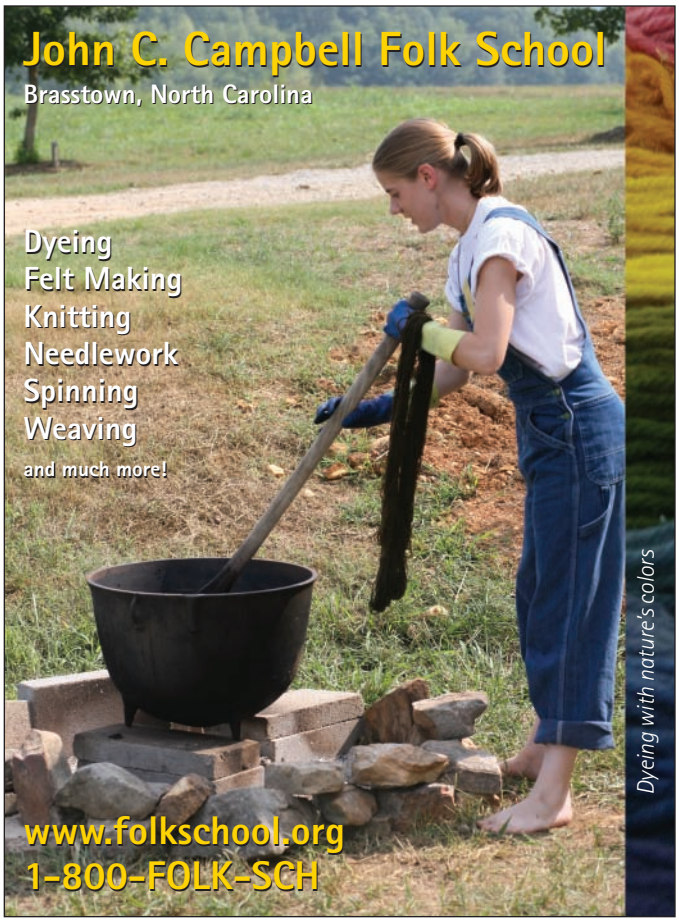
SAMPLE 1

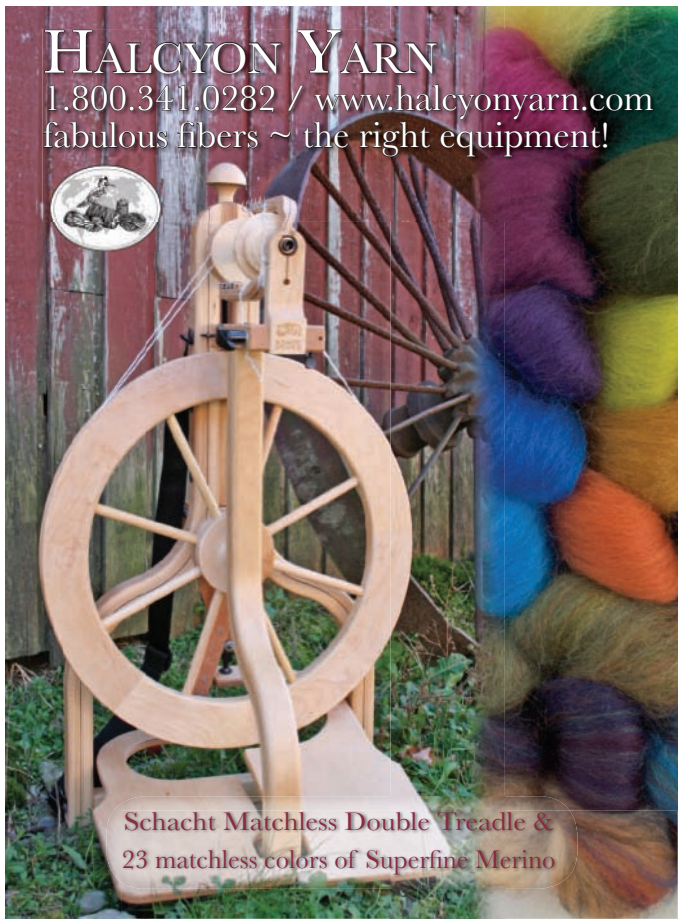
At SOAR 2007, I bought about 2 ounces each of the three pygora types from Peppermint Pastures (via Carolina Homespun). All were in roving form; two were natural colors (white and brown) and the third was dyed pink. For my first sample, I chose type C. I love knitting wrist warmers and thought this fiber had enough softness and "oomph" for an easy double-purl design. To make the purls stand out even more, I decided to spin a fine three-ply yarn.



Sample 1: **1.** Sample of type C roving from Peppermint Pastures Pygora Goats, natural brown. **2.** Small skein of 3-ply, Z/S-twist yarn that measures 14 wraps per inch. **3.** Pair of wrist warmers with double-purl zigzag pattern.

The fibers in the roving were about 3 inches long and semilustrous. There were a few long, rather coarse fibers as well as intermediate-quality hair fibers, but the bulk of the mass was soft and crimped. I divided the roving into three equal lengths and spun it from one end with a short forward draw, smoothing the fiber before it went onto the bobbin. My technique wasn't exactly the method for traditional worsted spinning, though. I didn't suppress the twist but let it flow into the fiber as I pulled forward. This sped up the spinning and made the yarn a bit softer, as less twist built up before the yarn went onto the bobbin. The singles measured 38 to 40 wraps per inch. After winding the singles into three balls, I plied them together on the same wheel (Lendrum double treadle) and at the same ratio (12:1) as for the singles. I soaked the skeined yarn in no-rinse wool wash, lightly squeezed out the excess water, and hung it on the clothesline to dry. The finished skein of three-ply yarn had 124 yards, weighed 1¾ ounces, and measured 14 wraps per inch.





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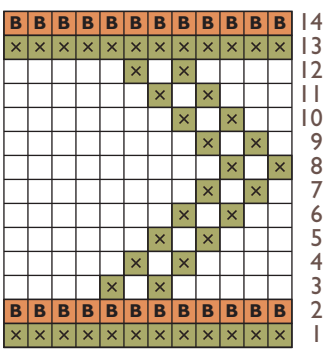
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I've long been intrigued by a very short mention of the "Finnish double purl" in Sheila McGregor's *The Complete Book of Traditional Scandinavian Knitting* (New York: St. Martin's, 1984). After receiving a pair of socks with double-purl designs (handknitted by Leena Alve) and a Finnish sock book with a pattern that looked similar, I studied everything, experimented, and figured out the trick. It is just a wrapped purl: Bring the yarn to the front and to the left of the stitch to be purled. Slip the stitch purlwise to right needle and bring yarn to back (the yarn now wraps the base of the stitch to be purled). Slip stitch back to left needle, bring yarn around to front (at right side of stitch), and purl as usual. The wrist warmers feature picot edgings and an easy zigzag design that work up quickly on U.S. size 2 (2.75 mm) needles with 48 sts around. As with all the pygora fibers I sampled, the yarn felt rather flat and lifeless until knitted, and then its soft, cushy qualities shone forth.

Double purl zigzag pattern

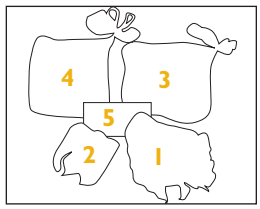


Key

× double purl

knit

B knit through back loop



Sample 2: **1.** Sample of type A washed fiber (donated by Rainbow Yarns Northwest). They describe the fiber as, "lustrous, longer staple, nice style, softer guard hair." **2.** A sample of washed Corriedale wool ewe fleece from Whitefish Bay Farm (www.whitefishbay.com). **3.** 100% type A pygora. **4.** 75% type A pygora/25% Corriedale wool. **5.** Card with samples of 100% pygora type A singles yarn and 2-ply (right side of card) and singles and 2-ply yarns of 75% pygora type A/25% Corriedale wool (left side of card).

SAMPLE 2

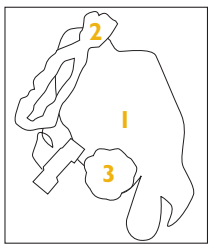
For my second sample, I decided to compare type A pygora alone and blended. The washed fiber was 6 inches long and lustrous. It looked and felt much like long kid-mohair fleece. However, as soon as I started carding, I could see shorter and slightly coarser fibers. Nonetheless, the fiber and yarn were soft; the varying fiber qualities made a somewhat loftier yarn than one would get from mohair. Terry at Rainbow Yarns Northwest described this fleece as "lustrous, longer staple, nice style, softer guard hair."

I handcarded ten rolags each of 100 percent pygora and about 75 percent pygora/25 percent Corriedale wool. Both sets of rolags were spun woolen (long draw) and plied on my Schacht Matchless wheel at a 9:1 ratio. The pygora/wool blend needed a bit of coaxing to draw out smoothly, and I treadled slowly to avoid overtwisting while I drafted carefully. The rolags of 100 percent pygora were slicker and drafted out quickly, and I had to treadle faster to be sure there was enough twist. The singles were very similar in size: 24 wraps per inch for the wool blend and 25 wraps per inch for the 100 percent pygora. The difference the addition of wool made was immediately visible when I plied and washed the yarns. The 100 percent pygora was almost dingy and inelastic, but sleek; the wool blend was brighter and bouncier. The differences were also evident in the wraps per inch for the two-ply yarns: 100 percent pygora measured 16 wraps per inch and the blend measured 13 wraps per inch.

What a surprise, then, when I began knitting. I started off trying U.S. size 5 needles and went up size by size to size 8. Suddenly the flat 100 percent pygora was lively, fluffy, and lustrous. The ply had relaxed and the fiber's fuzz filled in a lot of space in the knitting.

The swatch is 23 sts across with seed-stitch borders (alternate knit and purl sts), a simple 4-stitch cable with 2 purl sts on each side, and then gull wings (from Barbara Walker's *A Treasury of Knitting*





Sample 3: **1.** Sample of type B kid fiber (23.1 microns), natural brown, commercially carded into a "cloud," from Whistlekick Pygoras. **2.** Small skein of spindle-spun 2-ply yarn, 20 wraps per inch. **3.** Crocheted "noisette."

Patterns, Pittsville, Wisconsin: Schoolhouse Press, 201; reprinted with permission from Schoolhouse Press) over 7 sts (*Row 1:* K1, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, ssk, k1; *Row 3:* K2tog, yo, k3, yo, ssk; *WS rows:* Purl). After steam-pressing to block, the swatch of 100 percent pygora was smooth; the patterns showed but didn't stand out. The blended swatch had more elasticity, and both the lace and cable popped out more on the surface. Which one is better depends on your purpose and what you like.

SAMPLE 3

Two of the rovings in my assortment had fibers that were close to cashmere in quality. While type C is the cashmere-like pygora, the type B kid fiber from Whistlekick Pygoras was very similar to the type C samples I had. The kid fiber had been tested at 23.1 microns (so it was not as fine as cashmere, which is 18.5 microns or finer) and was dehaired and then commercially carded into a cloud. The fibers were about 2 inches long, so even though they were fine, the length meant a high twist wasn't necessary. I spun the singles on my Steve Paulsen Spindlewood .45-ounce square-whorl spindle and plied them on the Lendrum at 12:1. The two-ply yarn measured 20 wraps per inch. It was the finest of the fibers I tried, and even the yarn had a lofty feel.

I wanted to sample a crochet shawl pattern but couldn't decide on which one, so I crocheted a decorative "noisette rose" to embellish a shawl or cap instead. The pattern is found in "Weldon's Practical Crochet, Ninth Series," *Weldon's Practical Needlework,* Vol. 4 (Loveland, Colorado: Interweave, 2001). I've changed the original instructions to American crochet terms.

Ch 8 and join into a ring.

Round 1: Ch 6, 1 dc into ring, (ch 3, 1 dc into ring) 6 times, ch 3, join last ch with sl st to 3rd st of chain at beg of round.

Round 2: Work (1 sc, 4 dc, 1 sc) around every ch 3 loop of Round 1 = 8 petals.

Round 3: (1 sl st at back of work on top of the dc of first round, ch 4); repeat around and join last chain to first sl st.

Round 4: Work (1 sc, 6 dc, 1 sc) in every ch 4 loop.

Round 5: (1 sl st at back of work on top of the slip st of third round, ch 5); repeat around and join last chain to first sl st.

Round 6: Work (1 sc, 8 dc, 1 sc) in every ch 5 loop and join last sc to first with sl st. Cut yarn and weave in tails neatly on WS.

Normally I spin crochet yarn S/Z; otherwise, I have problems with the yarn unplying and becoming difficult to work with. In this case, the yarn relaxed somewhat, but I used a larger hook (U.S. size E/3.5 mm) than usual for this size yarn, and the crocheting proceeded smoothly. As with all the other pygora yarns, this one literally bloomed as it formed into a flower. It will make a lovely soft shawl and would be perfect for an exquisite baby cap.

All in all, I found pygora to be a wonderful fiber to spin and make into fabric. Each of the types has its special qualities, but all are soft and luxurious. I can't wait to spin more, as I know whatever I make will be luscious and warm. ⌘

Carol Rhoades of Madison, Wisconsin, is so happy she now lives in a climate where she can spin and knit wool and other warm fibers comfortably, even in the summer. Carol would like to thank all the suppliers listed here for the fibers and helpful information used in this article.

RESOURCES

Pygora Breeders Association, www.pba-pygora.com; 538 Lamson Rd., Lysander, NY 13027; pbaregistrar@aol.com.

Peppermint Pastures Pygora Goats fibers distributed by Carolina Homespun, www.carolinahomespun.com.

Rainbow Yarns Northwest, Terry Mattison and Susan Prechtl, www.rainbowyarnsnw.com.

Whistlekick Pygoras, 17976 County Road 3, Brainerd, MN 56401; (218) 825-9677.

Daurelle, Jude, "A Passion for Pygora." *Spin·Off*, 26, 2 (Summer 2002), 56–58.

Walker, Barbara G. *A Treasury of Knitting Patterns* (Pittsville, Wisconsin: Schoolhouse, 1998), 201.

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Project Notes

Fiber: Rainbow Yarns dehaired pygora, mixture of types A, B, and C, natural white.

Preparation: Commercially prepared "cloud."

Drafting method: Double drafting.

Wheel: Lendrum double treadle.

Wheel system: Flyer lead.

Ratio (singles/plying): 12:1.

Singles direction spun: Z.

Singles wraps per inch: 32–34.

Plied direction spun: S.

Plied twists per inch: 4.

Plied wraps per inch: 16.

Total yardage: 380.

Yards per pound: 1,192.

Yarn classification: Light worsted.

Yardage used: 365.

Needles: U.S. size 8 (5 mm).

Gauge: 5 sts and 5½ rows in lace pattern = 1".

Finished size: 8" x 71".

Carol Rhoades survived her first winter in Madison, Wisconsin. The city far surpassed the previous all-time snow record with a new total of 101.4 inches. Carol is so glad she has a basement full of fibers to keep her busy during future winters.

Plush Pygora Scarf

BY CAROL HUEBSCHER RHOADES

Rainbow Yarns Northwest generously donated several forms of pygora for the Fiber Basics article. The large bag of mixed types A, B, and C pygora fiber had been commercially carded into a light cloud. The dehaired fiber was a lovely mix of softness and luster that I wanted to maintain in the yarn. Softly spinning and plying the fiber resulted in a lustrous and plump yarn that glided through my hands as I knitted.

Preparing the fiber was easy. I gently peeled off thin layers from the batt and spun from an edge. So that the fiber cloud wouldn't disperse, I peeled off only one layer at a time, spun it, and then peeled another layer. As I spun, I was careful not to let a lot of twist build up, as that could easily make the yarn wiry. I spun with a double drafting backward draw, with twist entering the fiber as I drew back about 8 inches. Then I pinched off the fiber supply and the twist and pulled back a bit more to even out the yarn—with twist entering intermittently to keep the yarn stable. I was careful not to thin the yarn too much, again to prevent wiriness. I picked off the occasional little nub as the yarn was forming by pulling it toward the orifice and away from the yarn. The yarn was spun on my Lendrum double-treadle wheel at 12:1. A ply-back-on-itself test of the yarn showed that it would be an inelastic but fluffy two-ply yarn. To keep the fluffiness, I plied the yarn softly with a low twist. I set the twist by gently soaking the skein in a no-rinse wool wash for 15 minutes and then, after gently squeezing out the water down the skein, I hung it outside to dry. When it was partially dry (the top was almost dry but water had collected near the bottom), I squeezed it out again and hung it from the opposite side to complete drying.

My favorite scarf pattern is Crest of the Wave (sometimes called Foaming Waves). It's related to Feather and Fan but is not as common. In fact, I've had many knitters ask about the "unusual" pattern. It's easy to memorize, and the lace alternating with garter stitch lends a nice rhythm to the knitting process. I modified the original pattern slightly by adding 2 rows to the lace sequence. The edge stitches produce a chain effect along the sides, but feel free to simply knit the first and last stitches of each row if you prefer.

With a loose cast-on method (use the knitted cast-on or hold two needles together for long-tail cast-on), cast on 41 sts. Work in Crest of the Wave pattern to desired length (my scarf has 27 pattern repeats) and end with 4 rows garter stitch before binding off loosely.

Crest of the Wave (multiple of 12 + 1 + 2 edge stitches at each side) (From Barbara G. Walker's *A Treasury of Knitting Patterns*. Pittsville, Wisconsin: Schoolhouse Press, 1998: 205. Reprinted with permission from Schoolhouse Press.)

Rows 1–4: Sl1 knitwise, knit to last st, end purl 1.

Rows 5, 7, 9, 11, 13: Sl1 knitwise, k2, *(k2tog) 2 times, (yo, k1) 3 times, yo, (ssk) 2 times, k1; rep from * to last 2 sts and end k1, p1.

Rows 6, 8, 10, 12, 14: Sl1 knitwise, k1, purl to last 2 sts, end k1, p1.

Block by lightly steam-pressing scarf under a damp cloth and laying it flat to dry. ⌘



1. Carol's scarf takes advantage of pygora's natural luster and weight. **2.** Natural white pygora fiber (types A, B, and C) that has been dehaired, blended, and commercially processed into a "cloud" (donated by Rainbow Yarns Northwest). **3.** 2-ply skein spun Z, plied S, 16 wraps per inch, and 1,192 yards per pound.

Handspun Gallery of
Baby Surprise Jackets



Spring BSJ

Fiber: 4 oz hand-dyed roving in Lazy Daisy (Merino) and Forest (fine Shetland) from Pigeonroof Studios (Krista McCurdy).

Drafting method: Short backward draw.

Wheel: Kromski Minstrel.

Wheel system: Double drive.

Ratio (singles/plying): 8.5:1 (both).

Singles direction spun: Z.

Singles twists per inch: 6.

Singles wraps per inch: 16.

Plied direction spun: S.

Plied twists per inch: 7.

Plied wraps per inch: 12.

Total yardage: 140.

Yards per pound: 560.

Yarn classification: Light worsted-weight 2-ply.

Yardage used: 135.

Pattern: The Baby Surprise Jacket from *The Opinionated Knitter* and *Knitting Workshop,* both by Elizabeth Zimmermann (Pittsville, Wisconsin: Schoolhouse Press).

Needles: U.S. size 6.

Gauge: 5½ sts = 1".

Finished size: 18" chest (buttoned), 18" from cuff to cuff, 10.5" height.

The history

Elizabeth Zimmermann's (EZ) unique, one-piece Baby Surprise Jacket (BSJ)—sometimes described as an origami puzzle, a manta ray, or a potato chip—was originally designed in 1968 as she anticipated the birth of her first grandchild.

She and her husband were traveling, and Elizabeth was knitting a garter-stitch cap that came to a point in the middle of the baby's forehead. During the trip, she lost her instructions and tossed the knitting onto a chair. The next morning, as she glanced at the configuration in which the knitting had fallen, it looked like a sleeve with a 90-degree turn on the back.

How that brief observation turned into the BSJ design always remained rather vague to my mother. I think it was one of the many times she had her receptors open, and the information was beamed down from above.

To knit this one-piece garment, Elizabeth has you cast on around one cuff, along the sleeve, across the neck back, down the other sleeve, and around the second cuff. You then knit back and forth in garter stitch, working double decreases at two points, which form right angles on the backs of the sleeves (particularly effective when you insert color stripes, as Inner Directed*). At a certain point, the double decreases become double increases, but the Important Center Stitch is unaltered.

This little garment is apparently quite addictive to many knitters. Online at present there are literally thousands of BSJs already knitted, or queued, or in progress and being discussed. Would not Elizabeth be amazed and pleased? Indeed.

Meg Swansen
Schoolhouse Press

*Inner Directed is an EZ phrase that means making decisions by following your inner voice, that is, if you agree with it.

The Spring and Autumn Baby Surprise Jackets

BY JARED FLOOD

There's not much to say about this pattern that hasn't already been said hundreds of times. If you've knitted one, you know. If you haven't, you should. The pattern can be found in *Knitting Workshop* and *The Opinionated Knitter,* and is also available in newsletter form from Schoolhouse Press as well as a DVD walkthrough with Meg Swansen.

Here are my second and third BSJs. My (ceremonial) first was made in early summer of last year, and it happened to be the first time I ever officially knitted with handspun. After that it was all over.

I think this pattern is a great match for handspun yarn—the self-striping nature of handspun accentuates the shaping of the garment, and the slightly irregular texture suits garter stitch wonderfully. Not to mention, you can knit a whole one using 4 to 5 ounces of yarn, and spinners usually have a lot of small batches of handspun lying around. It's no wonder the Baby Surprise, aside from its obvious intuitive cleverness, is such a hit with spinners especially.

Jared Flood is a photographer and knitwear designer living and working in New York City. He is the creator of brooklyntweed.net.



Photos by Jared Flood.

Autumn BSJ

Fiber: 100% Merino (22 microns).

Preparation: 4 oz hand-dyed roving in Burning Bush colorway. Dyed by Amy King of Spunky Eclectic.

Drafting method: Short backward draw.

Wheel: Kromski Minstrel.

Wheel system: Double drive.

Ratio (singles/plying): 8.5:1 for both singles and plying.

Singles direction spun: Z.

Singles twists per inch: 6.

Singles wraps per inch: 17.

Plied direction spun: S.

Plied twists per inch: 6.

Plied wraps per inch: 12.

Total yardage: 140.

Yards per pound: 560.

Yarn classification: Double knitting weight 2-ply.

Yardage used: 135.

Pattern: The Baby Surprise Jacket from *The Opinionated Knitter* and *Knitting Workshop,* both by Elizabeth Zimmermann (Pittsville, Wisconsin: Schoolhouse Press).

Needles: U.S. size 6.

Gauge: 5.5 sts = 1".

Finished size: 18.5" chest (buttoned), 19" from cuff to cuff, 11.5" height.

Spun Berries BSJ

BY TRACY HUDSON OF DOHA, QATAR

This was my first completed spin-to-knit project bigger than a neck wrap. I tested the BSJ pattern with commercial yarn and admired all the handspun versions I saw on blogs and Ravelry. My cousin is expecting, so I set out to adorn the baby with handspun, spinning and blending the two rovings on my top-whorl spindle. Maybe I should have gone up a needle size or two, but I wanted the jacket to fit the baby within the first year of his or her life. I haven't purchased buttons yet as the baby's gender is also a surprise.



PHOTOS BY TRACY HUDSON

Spun Berries BSJ

Fiber: 100% Merino.

Preparation: Handpainted roving from Spunky Eclectic (Emerald Isles and Berry Pickin' colorways).

Drafting method: Short draw.

Spindle: Ashford top-whorl, 1.3 oz, 2.5" whorl.

Singles direction spun: Z.

Twist angle: 30° (plied).

Plied direction spun: S.

Plied twists per inch: 5 (average).

Plied wraps per inch: 9.

Total yardage: 340.

Yards per pound: 550.

Yarn classification: Aran weight.

Yardage used: 324.

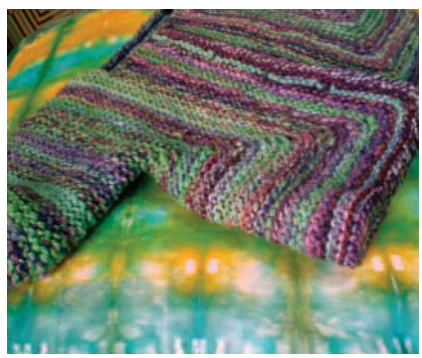
Needles: U.S. size 6.

Gauge: 4½ sts = 1".

Finished size: 11" x 21".

Note: I made the jacket without the 10 extra rows of length in the original pattern.







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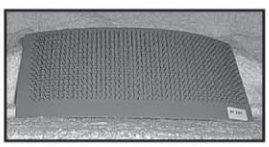
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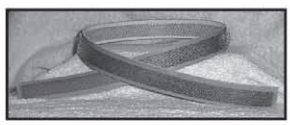
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PHOTO BY JILL PACKARD

Handspun BSJ

BY JILL PACKARD OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

I wanted to do this project in preparation for doing an adult surprise jacket. I didn't realize it was going to eat up so much yarn! My first skein of handspun (that I made about two years ago) was used up in the arms alone. I had to go back to the dyepot and try to come up with something complementary, since I knew I wouldn't be able to exactly duplicate my original. I dyed up an additional 4½ ounces, but it still wasn't enough. I supplemented with some undyed fiber to set off the two dyelots and to add the border and I-cord edging/buttonholes. All told, I had to go back to the wheel five times to come up with enough yardage to finish the project. I am thrilled with the results, though. It's a really pretty sweater and the first major project completed with my handspun.

Handspun BSJ

Fiber: Brown Sheep Company mill end rovings, natural and hand-dyed.

Dyes: Cushing acid dyes in reseda green, navy blue, and buttercup yellow.

Drafting method: Semiworsted.

Wheel: Lendrum.

Wheel system: Scotch tension.

Singles direction spun: Z.

Plied direction spun: S.

Yarn classification: Heavy worsted.

Needles: U.S. size 7.

Gauge: 4½ sts = 1".

Finished size: Toddler.

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Dinosaur Surprise Jacket

BY PAMELA UDOMPRASERT OF SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT

I learned to spin in October 2007 and became swiftly and completely addicted. By December, I felt proficient and decided it was time to tackle something that involved spinning yarn for a particular project. I had been building my knitting library, and of course that included all of the Elizabeth Zimmermann books. The ingenious Baby Surprise Jacket really captured my interest because I love puzzles and origami, and it reminded me of both. At that time there were about 1,200 Baby Surprise Jackets on Ravelry, and I was inspired by the variety of colors and striping that could be done. My favorites, however, were the ones with gradual color changes, such as those with the Noro yarns and handspun versions by Hello Yarn and Brooklyn Tweed. I felt that the Dinosaur colorway from Amy King of Spunky Eclectic would work well. Since I was making the sweater for my 3½-year-old boy and not a baby, I spun it into a two-ply bulky-weight yarn, which required a great deal of concentration after I had gotten used to spinning laceweight singles! Initially, I bought 8 ounces of fiber, but when I realized that would be nowhere near enough to complete the sweater, I asked Amy to dye up another 8 ounces, this time just using the brown shades from the Dinosaur colorway to use as stripes. Unfortunately, I still ran out of yarn and asked her to dye up yet another batch for me, which she did very graciously. With that I was able to complete the buttonband and lengthen the sleeves. I am thrilled with the way it turned out, and my son enjoys wearing it, too!





Timothy Udomprasert in his Dinosaur Surprise Jacket.

PHOTO BY PATRICIA SIMCOE UDOMPRASERT

Dinosaur Surprise Jacket

Fiber: 24 oz superwash Merino from Spunky Eclectic in colorways Dinosaur and Special Brown that Amy King of Spunky Eclectic dyed especially for me.

Preparation: Predrafted.

Drafting method: Medium backward draw.

Wheel: Lendrum double treadle.

Wheel system: Scotch tension.

Ratio (singles/plying): 6:1.

Yards per pound: 450.

Yarn classification: Bulky.

Yardage used: 520.

Needles: U.S. size 10.5.

Gauge: 14 stitches = 4".

Finished size: 27" around the chest, buttoned.



PHOTO BY PAMELA UDOMPRASERT

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Surprise Jacket for Twinkle

By Sarah Morgan of La Plata, New Mexico

I'd seen so many adorable BSJs on the Internet from handspun, I had to try it out myself. I made this one in anticipation of our first baby, who should arrive anytime now!



Surprise Jacket for Twinkle

Fiber: 100% Merino.

Preparation: Combed commercial top.

Drafting method: Semiwoolen (drawing back, but using the forward hand to control twist in the drafting zone more than for a true woolen).

Wheel: Fricke 160 double treadle.

Wheel system: Scotch tension.

Ratio (singles/plying): 9:1 for both.

Singles direction spun: Z.

Plied direction spun: S.

Plied wraps per inch: 8.

Total yardage: 215 yards from 4 oz for the main color, plus 40 yards of stash yarn.

Yards per pound: 860.

Yarn classification: Worsted-weight.

Yardage used: 255.

Needles: U.S. size 8.

Gauge: 4–5 sts = 1".

Finished size: To fit baby 6–18 months.



Photos by Sarah Morgan

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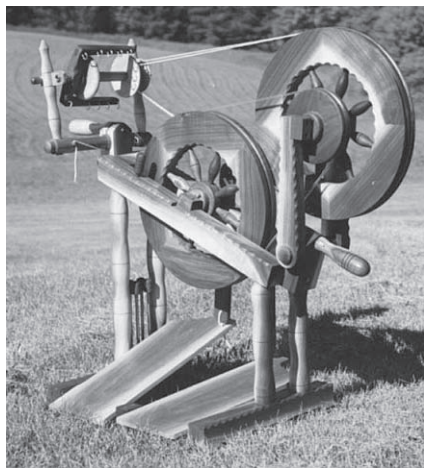
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Handspun Baby Surprise Jacket

Fiber: Superwash Merino hand-dyed by Funky Carolina in the colorway Greenery.

Preparation: I split each half of the 4 oz into four equal parts and then spun them end to end.

Wheel: Lendrum double treadle.

Wheel system: Scotch tension.

Ratio (singles/plying): 10:1 (both).

Singles direction spun: Z.

Plied direction spun: S.

Total yardage: 200.

Yardage used: 200, plus 95 yards of commercial yarn.

Needles: U.S. size 4.

Gauge: 6 sts = 1", 12 rows = 1".

Finished size: 17½" chest circumference.



PHOTOS BY AMI MADISON

Handspun Baby Surprise Jacket

BY AMI MADISON OF COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO

I've always wanted to make a Baby Surprise Jacket and was given the perfect opportunity when my mom asked for a handknit gift for a baby shower she was attending. As a fairly new spinner, the garter stitch and simple construction of the Baby Surprise Jacket looked as though it would highlight my novice attempts at handspun yarn and satisfy my mom's request for a unique gift. I picked some superwash Merino two-ply that I had already spun (superwash because it was baby friendly) and the tightly plied, densely spun two-ply that I had been creating in mass quantities in my quest for the perfect handspun sock yarn. Even though I was fairly certain that I wouldn't have enough yardage to finish, I started anyway, assuming that I could find some fiber or yarn to match. I was able to use Rowan's RYC Cashsoft four-ply for the last one-third of my jacket.



Knitting Abbreviations

* *—repeat all instructions between *
beg—begin(ning)
BO—bind off
cn—cable needle
CO—cast on
dec—decrease
dpn—double-pointed needles
inc—increase
k—knit
k2tog—knit 2 together
M1—make 1 by picking up loop between 2 sts, place on left needle and k into back of loop
M1L—work same as M1
M1R—make 1 by picking up loop between 2 sts, place on left needle and k into front of loop
p—purl
psso—pass sl st over
p2tog—purl 2 together
rem—remain(ing)
rep—repeat
rnd(s)—round(s)
RS—right side
sl—slip
ssk—slip 1 knitwise (twice), place on left needle and knit together through back loops
st(s)—stitch(es)
tbl—through the back loop
WS—wrong side
wyb—with yarn in back
yo—yarnover

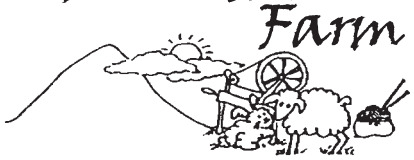
Crochet Abbreviations

ch—chain
dc—double crochet
dc 2 tog—*yarn over hook, hook under loop of next st, wrap yarn and draw through, yarn over hook and draw through first two loops on hook; rep from *, end with yarn over hook, and draw it through all three loops on hook
dtr—double treble crochet
rep—repeat
sc—single crochet
sl st—slip stitch
sp—space
st(s)—stitch(es)
tr—treble crochet

Spinning Abbreviations

bpi—bumps per inch
tpi—twists per inch
wpi—wraps per inch
ypp—yards per pound

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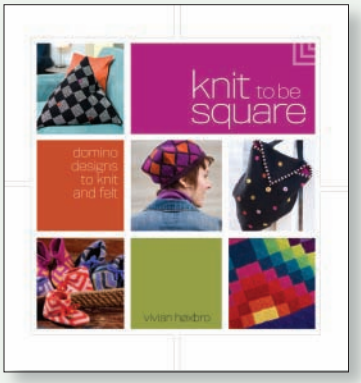


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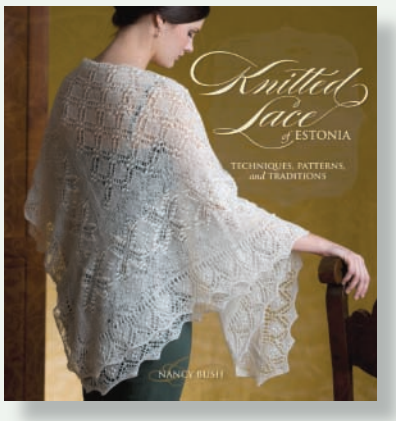


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October 25. Southwest Fiber Festival, in Amado. Deborah Brunner, (520) 625-8788; www.southwestfiberfestival.com.

November 8. Lace Day, sponsored by Lacey Ladies of Arizona, at University Presbyterian Church, 139 E. Alameda Dr., Tempe, AZ 85282. Jean Doig, doigfiber@cox.net or Mary Solano, marysolano@earthlink.net.

CALIFORNIA

September 12–14. California Wool & Fiber Festival, at Mendocino County Fairgrounds, Boonville. (707) 983-9147; www.fiberfestival.com.

October 4–5. Natural Fiber Fair, at Mateel Community Center, Redway. Laura Doyle-Wilder, (707) 777-3918; naturalfiberfair@yahoo.com.

October 11. Anza Valley 1st Annual Fiber Festival, at Anza Community Hall, 56630 Hwy 371. Patricia Greenbaum, (951) 763-1048; www.fallfiberfest.com.

November 2. Weaving and Fiber Festival, sponsored by the Southern California Handweavers' Guild. Torrance Cultural Arts Center, 3350 Civic Center Dr., Torrance. (818) 370-3602. http://www.schg.org/festival/.

COLORADO

September 27–28. National Alpaca Farm Days, at Jefferson County Fairgrounds Events Center, Golden. Deborah Robinson, (303) 503-4117; terrasolunalpacas@earthlink.net.

ILLINOIS

September 20. Fiber in the Park, at Shabbona Park, 4165 E. 16th Rd., Earlville, IL 60518. www.fiberinthepark.com.

October 18. Bishop Hill Fiber Guild Spin-In, at Black Hawk East College, Kewanee. Char Rickey, 6719 N. Parkwood Dr., Peoria, IL 61614. (309) 692-6344; SpinWool7@aol.com; www.BishopHillFiberGuild.org.

MAINE

September 19–21. Common Ground Country Fair, in Unity, includes fiber activities and sales. (207) 785-2784; www.mofga.org.

MASSACHUSETTS

October 10–12. Cape Ann Spin and Knit Mittens Retreat, at Long Beach, Rockport. http://countrywool.tripod.com/retreats/casp_f8.htm.

November 7–9. The Gathering, Northeast Handspinners Association. The Sheraton Colonial Hotel, Wakefield. Brochure: $15 to Farilyn Van Cleef, 42 Larson Dr., North Haven, CT 06473. www.nehandspinners.org.

MICHIGAN

September 26–28. Northern Michigan Lamb & Wool Festival, at Ogemaw County Fairgrounds, West Branch. holly@shaltzfarm.com; www.lambandwoolfestival.com.

September 27–28. Sheep & Wool Festival, at Mt. Bruce Station, 6440 Bordman Rd., Romeo, MI 48065. (810) 798-2568; uhlianuk@sheepstuff.com; www.sheepstuff.com.

NEW JERSEY

September 26–28. Fibre Fallout 2008, hosted by North Country Spinners, at Johnsonburg Presbyterian Center, Johnsonburg. NCS Fibre Fallout 2008, PO Box 531, Hope, NJ 07844. www.northcountryspinners.org.

NORTH CAROLINA

October 24–26. Southeastern Animal Fiber Fair, at WNC Agricultural Center, Fletcher (across from Airport Exit 40 off I-26). Teri Gabric, (864) 468-4220; www.saffsite.org.

OHIO

September 20–21. A Wool Gathering, at Young's Dairy, Yellow Springs. Lois Pelekoudas, (937) 325-7781; cgplmp@erinet.com; www.awoolgathering.com.

PENNSYLVANIA

September 6–7. Endless Mountains Fiber Festival, at Harford Fairgrounds, I-81 Exit 217. (570) 278-1158; www.pafiberfestival.com.

September 19–20. Knitters' Day Out, at Central Pennsylvania College, Summerdale. Cherie Mansberger, (717) 246-5791; www.knittersdayout.org.

SOUTH DAKOTA

September 20–21. North Country Fiber Fair, at the Extension building, Watertown. www.northcountryfiberfair.org.

WASHINGTON

September 26–28. Shafer Meadows Fiber Festival, at the Old Game Farm near Montesano, Grays Harbor County. Betty Downes, PO Box 611, Ocean Shores, WA 98569. (360) 289-2015 or Janet, midearth@techline.com.

WISCONSIN

September 5–7. Wisconsin Sheep & Wool Festival, at Jefferson Fair Park, Jefferson. (608) 868-2505; wisbc@centurytel.net; www.wisconsinsheepandwoolfestival.com.

CONFERENCES

HAWAII

September 24–27. Textiles as Cultural Expressions, biennial symposium of the Textile Society of America. Tom Klobe, klobetm@hawaii.edu; www.textilesociety.org.

TEXAS

March 26–29, 2009. Contemporary Handweavers of Texas Conference, in San Antonio. Trish Ashton, 5100 Sirretta Dr., San Antonio, TX 78233; taashton@swbell.net.

BRAZIL

September 4–9. World Congress on Coloured Sheep, at Esteio and Gramado, Rio Grande do Sul. abconc@gmail.com; amato@cpovo.net; www.arcoovinos.com.br/worldcongress.

CANADA, ONTARIO

May 1–3, 2009. Fibre Unleashed: Pushing the Limits, biennial conference of Ontario Handweavers and Spinners, at Nottawasaga Inn, Alliston. Judy Pergau Comfort, (905) 473-2669; rcomfort@neptune.on.ca; www.ohs.on.ca.

GERMANY

October 2–5. Annual conference of the German Handspinners' Guild, at Familienferienstätte "St. Ursula," Naundorf/Sachsen. Andrea Riebe, Sellnitz 34, 01814 Porschdorf; Wollnetz@web.de; www.handspinngilde.org.

EXHIBITS, SHOWS, AND SALES

COLORADO

October 23–25. Rocky Mountain Weavers' Guild Fiber Art Show and Sale, at Englewood Civic Center, 2nd Fl. Community Room, 1000 Englewood Pkwy., Englewood. Lois Hawk, (303) 697-1734; loishawk@wispertel.net; www.rmweaversguild.org.

October 31–November 8. Handwoven Holiday, sale by Handweavers Guild of Pueblo, at Vail Hotel, 217 S. Grand, Pueblo. Betty Kochevar, (719) 561-3762; Peggy McIntosh, plmcintosh@gmail.com; handweaversguild@yahoo.com.

November 15. San Juan Weavers Guild Show and Sale, at Holiday Inn Express, 1391 S. Townsend Ave., Montrose. Bobbie Irwin, (970) 249-2981; irwin@rmi.net.

FLORIDA

November 20–22. Fabulous Arts Boutique, joint sale by Manasota Weavers Guild and other art guilds, at the Art Center Sarasota, 707 N. Tamiami Tr., Sarasota. Kathie Hayes, (941) 923-8554 or Pat Fox, (941) 924-8323; newmoonpat@aol.com.

HAWAII

Through September 27. WeARTables, Handweavers' Hui exhibition of contemporary wearable fiber art, at Louis Pohl Gallery of Fine Art, 1111 Nu'uanu Ave., Honolulu, HI 96817. Sydney Lynch, kenjoinc@aloha.net; www.louispohlgallery.com. **Through December 31.** Pauahi: A Legacy for Hawai'i, exhibit including kapa cloth in the Castle Memorial Building. Contemporary Hawaiian Textile Exhibition, in the J. M. Long Gallery. **September 13–January 11, 2009.** Ili Iho: The Surface Within, rare textiles, in the J. M. Long Gallery. Bishop Museum, 1525 Bernice St., Honolulu, HI 96817. www.bishopmuseum.org.

September 6–28. Tattered Cultures: Mended Histories, at Academy Art Center, 1111 Victoria St., Honolulu, HI 96814. www.honoluluacademy.org.

September 16–October 11. Fiber Hawai'i, at the ARTS at Mark's Garage, 1159 Nu'uanu Ave., Honolulu, HI 96817. www.hawaiicraftsmen.org; www.artsatmarks.com.

September 21–October 31. Writing with Thread: Traditional Textiles of Southwest Chinese Minorities, exhibit at Manoa Art Gallery, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu. www.hawaii.edu/artgallery.

September 25–December 31. Fiber Artists of Hawai'i, at The Contemporary Museum at First Hawaiian Center, 999 Bishop St., Honolulu, HI 96813.

ILLINOIS

October 2–26. Show and Sale by Woodstock Weavers Guild and Hollow Tree Spinners Guild, at Old Courthouse Arts Center, Woodstock, IL 60098. (815) 338-4525; www.woodstockweaversguild.org.

October 11. Weavings & Diversities, show and sale by Weavers' Guild South, at Flossmoor Community House, 847 Hutchison, Flossmoor. Ginny, (708) 747-9246.

KENTUCKY

September 6–December 31. American Tapestry Biennial 7, at Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, 715 W. Main St., Louisville. American Tapestry Alliance, PO Box 28600, San Jose, CA 95159. www.americantapestryalliance.org.

MICHIGAN

Through September 21. Michigan League of Handweavers Fiber Show, at Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History, Jackson. www.mlhguild.com; www.ellasharp.org.

November 13–15. Weavers and Fiber Artists of Kalamazoo Sale and Exhibit, at Kalamazoo County Expo Center and Fair-

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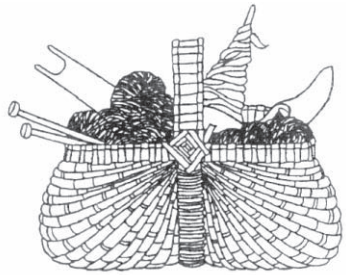


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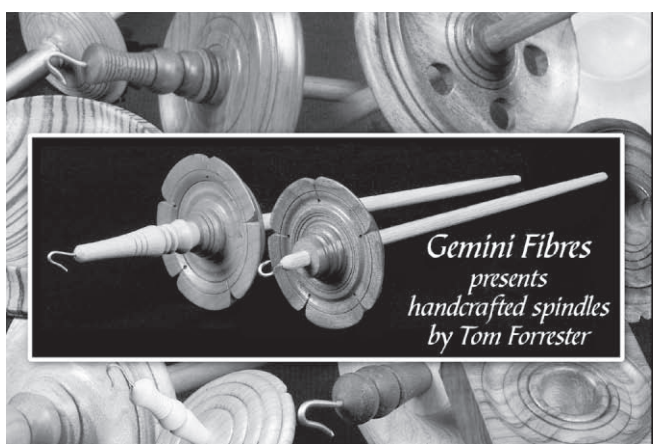
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MINNESOTA

November 14–16. Weavers Guild of Minnesota Fiber Fair sale, at the Textile Center, 3000 University Ave. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414. (612) 436-0463; info@weaversguildmn.org; www.weaversguildmn.org.

MISSOURI

October 31–November 1. Weavers' Guild of St. Louis Sale, at Brentwood Community Center, 2505 S. Brentwood Blvd., St. Louis. (636) 343-5643; www.weaversguildstl.org/sale2008/htm.

November 7–9. Columbia Weavers & Spinner's Guild Holiday Sale and Exhibition, at Boone County Historical Society, 3801 Ponderosa St., Columbia. Karen Kelley Schultz, (636) 479-5659; http://cwsg.missouri.org.

NEW JERSEY

Through September 21. Fabulous Fiber, juried exhibit at The Monmouth Museum, 765 Newman Springs Rd., Brookdale Community College, PO Box 359, Lincroft, NJ 07738. (732) 747-2266; www.monmouthmuseum.org.

NEW MEXICO

Through January 4, 2009. Needles and Pins: Textiles and Tools, exhibit at Museum of International Folk Art, Museum Hill, Camino Lejo off Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe. (505) 476-1200; www.internationalfolkart.org.

NEW YORK

October 9–November 2. Women's fine craft exhibition and boutique, at Pen and Brush, 16 E. 10th St., New York, NY 10003. www.penandbrush.org.

VIRGINIA

September 9–October 5. How Does It Feel? **October 7–November 16.** Fall Garden Delights. Potomac Craftsmen Fiber Gallery, Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St., Studio 18, Alexandria, VA 22314. (703) 548-0935; www.Potomaccraftsmengallery.com.

WASHINGTON

Through November 9. SQ3Tsya'yay: Weaver's Spirit Power, exhibit of Coast Salish weaving at White River Valley Museum, 918 H St. SE, Auburn, WA 98002. (253) 288-7433; www.wrvmuseum.org.

September 20. Whidbey Island Fabulous Fall Fiber Sale, at Paradise Found Fiber Farm, 4081 Springwater Ln., Clinton, WA 98236. (360) 579-1906; Mary Donaty, lamalou@whidbey.com.

October 23–25. Seattle Weavers' Guild Sale, at St. Marks Cathedral, 1245 10th Ave. E., Seattle. (206) 264-5496; www.seattleweaversguild.com.

November 7–8. Uncommon Threads, Whidbey Weavers Guild Sale, at Greenbank Farm, 765 Wonn Rd., off SR 525, Whidbey Island. www.whidbeyweaversguild.org.

INSTRUCTION

MASSACHUSETTS

Handspinning Angora Blends, October 10–11. **Knitting Mittens Marathon,** October 12. Classes with Claudia Krisniski, in conjunction with Cape Ann Spin and Knit Mittens Retreat, on Long Beach, in Rockport. http://countrywool.tripod.com/retreats/casp_f8.htm.

NORTH CAROLINA

Some of My Favorite Wools Are Scottish, September 7–13, with Martha Owen. **Shetland Lace Knitting,** September 28–October 3, with Elizabeth Johnston. **Viking Spinner Lands in Appalachia,** November 21–23, with Noel Thurner. Additional fiber-related classes throughout the year. John C. Campbell Folk School, 1 Folk School Rd., Brasstown, NC 28902. (800) 365-5724; www.folkschool.org.

OKLAHOMA

Master Spinners, Levels I, II, III, October 13–17, in Davis. Otto Pahl, (800) 661-6537 ext. 4677; opahl@oldscollege.ca.

WASHINGTON

Fleece in Your Hands, October 26–November 1, with Judith MacKenzie McCuin. Guemes Island Retreats. Barbara McGuiness, (360) 293-7973 or Nancy White, white@cnw.com.

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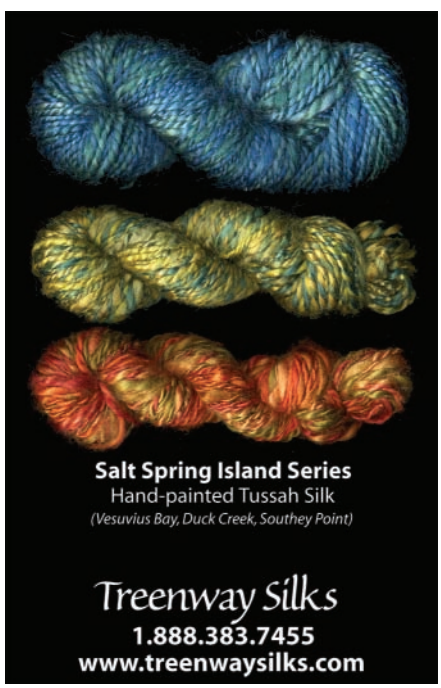
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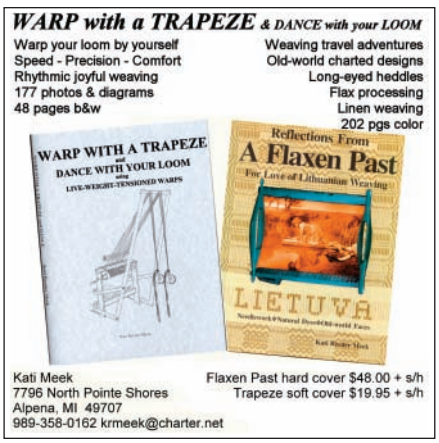
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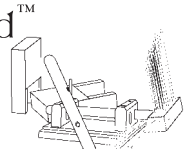
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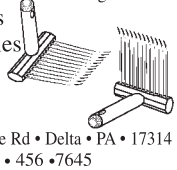
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Finding My Wheel

BY LINNEA TIPPETT

I am, like so many other spinners, a professional. Oh, no—I'm not a professional spinner—that's far too lofty a claim for my abilities. Rather, I have a challenging, rewarding, and often stressful full-time career. Of course you know that spinning is a fabulous way to take one's mind off the drain of a day of hard work, but most of my coworkers view my leisurely pursuits in the world of fiber as something of a mystery—strange and diametrically opposed to life at the office. Yes, you could call me domestic, but don't you dare think that I'll retreat in tears if you mess with me during a meeting. Thought that yarn meant I wasn't tough, huh? Guess again!

This all changed—at least temporarily—during a trip last fall to Poland. Some friends and I went on a long overnight bus ride for a Pottery Tour. The plan was to visit as many pottery factories as humanly possible during a sixteen-hour period, and the apparent intent of most people accompanying us was to purchase and bring back as much pottery as would fit on the bus. The shopping extravaganza began as soon as we arrived, at 4:30 a.m. By 2:30 that afternoon, absolutely exhausted and overwhelmed, I was fervently wishing that I never had to see another pottery factory again so long as I lived. With yet another six hours to go and desperately seeking a change in scenery, I stepped into the only shop in sight that did not contain vases or plates: an antique store that seemed to deal mainly in World War II memorabilia. No matter. I was out of the rain and away from the pottery.

And then I saw her. My wheel. Sitting dusty and neglected in a corner was a beautiful castle-style wheel painted with faded but still-vivid stripes of green, red, and black.

Instantly, I knew that the wheel was *mine*—it was meant for me. Seeing that I was truly serious, the owner decided that bargaining was in his favor, and after a few minutes we settled on 50 euros. The rest of the afternoon was a blur, and after carefully securing my new purchase to an empty seat on the bus, I fell sound asleep—dreaming, no doubt, of spinning as soon as I got home.



ILLUSTRATION BY BEN CLARKE

Several hours later, one of my traveling companions shook me awake. We were at the border, and the customs officials were boarding the bus to check passports. Nearing my seat, a uniformed man stopped and glared at my wheel. "This is not allowed," he stated matter-of-factly. While the thousands of dollars' worth of pottery carefully packed and stowed in the holds of the bus was not a problem, judging from the serious look on the man's face, the wheel was definitely an issue. So I did what any proud and obstinate career-minded person would do. I burst into tears.

"Come with me." The customs official led me off the bus and escorted me to a room in a concrete building, where I waited, miserably huddled on a folding chair, trying to make sense of the foreign voices in the adjacent room. Finally, two officials arrived to ask questions. "You cannot take this," said the first. "It is an antique." (I learned later that the export of things more than fifty years of age from Poland technically requires a permit.) A long, sniffling pause followed, then, "What are you going to do with it?" Overwhelmed by the thought of losing the wheel, I sobbed hysterically: "Puhleasse!! I just want to make yarn!" Then, completely uncharacteristic to my don't-mess-with-me persona, I kept on crying. Weeping. Mourning.

The officials, by that time numbering at half a dozen, gathered around me. Why was some half-crazed tourist bawling over an old wheel? And what were they supposed to do about it? Perhaps I was just lucky—or maybe there was another spinner there, wearing a uniform and attending to duties while dreaming of Merino and silk—but finally, I was told I could leave, wheel and all. Proud yet humbled, I reboarded the bus, wheel in tow, to the applause of my fellow passengers who were gracious enough to forgive the delay I had caused.

Linnea Tippett, of Germany, spins with two Polish wheels, the most recent addition being a Kromski Minstrel. See more on her occasional fiber blog, http://lackofalltrades.blogspot.com.



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