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Spin Off

the art & craft of spinning yarn

Vol. XLI No.1 Spring 2017



Photo by George Boe

Above and cover: How Many Ways Can You Make a Gradient Yarn, featured on page 44.



MAKING CHOICES

If I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times: Spinners are so lucky because we get to decide exactly how our project will be.

We have all the choices in the world, from tools to materials to techniques to end uses. That's all well and good, but there is growing science that points to "decision fatigue," or the way our decision-making capabilities erode the more choices we are asked to make. Other research suggests that although we all like the idea of having choices, an abundance of options can actually make us less satisfied with anything on offer.

So why devote an entire issue to a subject with questionable potential for happiness?

Two reasons: First, the stories of spinners who have made these choices before you can make choices clearer. Second, unlike the Choose Your Own Adventure series that was popular in my childhood, there are very few truly terrible spinning choices. Some may be iffy—are you *sure* you want to spin raw wool? You know that anthrax used to be called "woolsorters' disease," right?—but if your spinning isn't singing to you, choose something else. Or, as Leslie Ann Hauer says on page 67, forget choices altogether and do what pleases you.

Spin happy,



Anne Merrow
amerrow@interweave.com



Photo by George Boe

Which is the right spindle for the job? Find out on page 48.

Spin Off
Vol. XLI No. 1 Spring 2017

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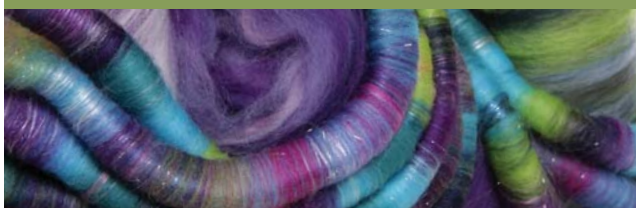
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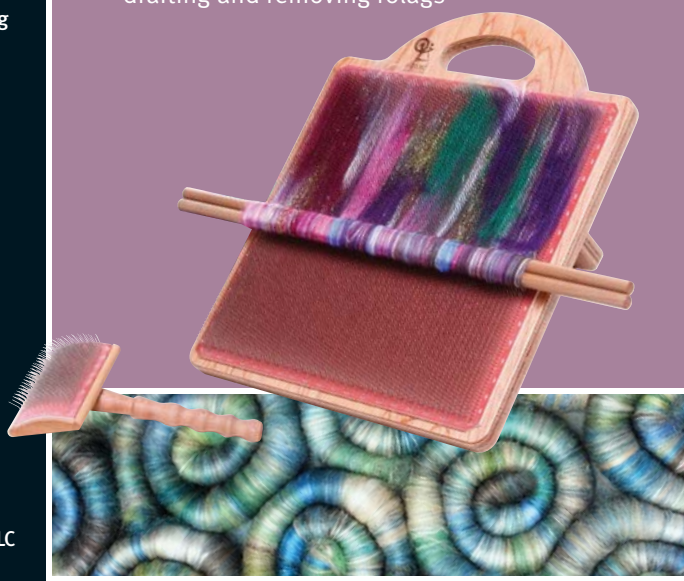
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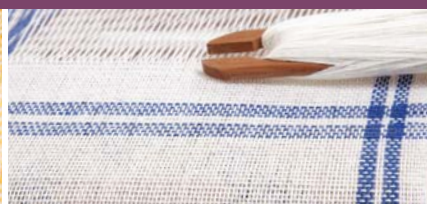
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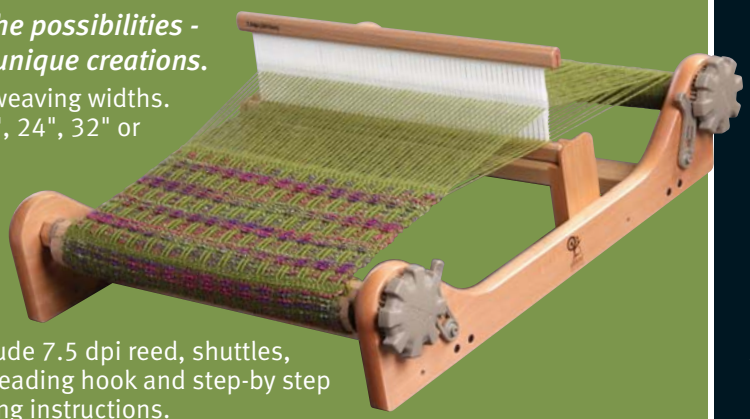
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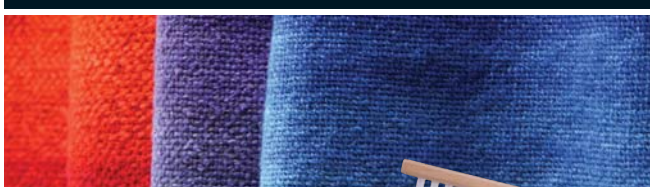
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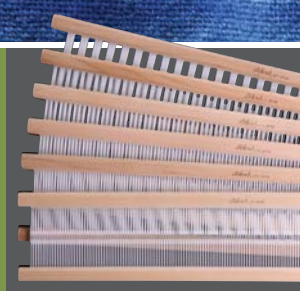
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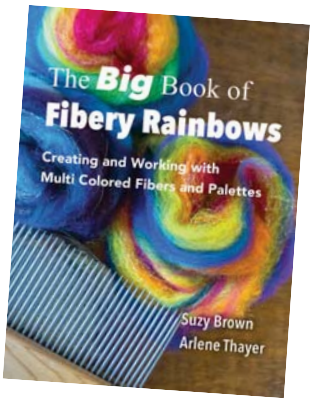
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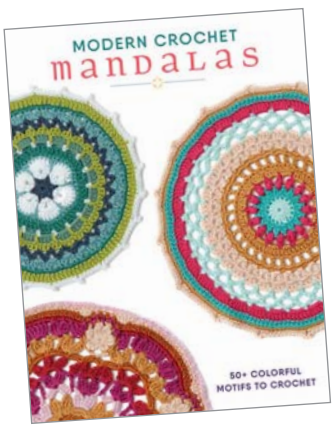
by Suzy Brown and Arlene Thayer



Captivated by texture and color, Suzy Brown and Arlene Thayer share their fibery exploits on the blogs www.woolwench.com, www.spinartiste.com, and www.fiberygoodness.com. Their sites are fueled by an endless dose of curiosity and experimentation.

Drawing inspiration from a meteorological marvel, *The Big Book of Fibery Rainbows* is a self-published tribute to the art of spinning that ranges from inspiration and historical context to exploration of the many variations of rainbows and how to capture the spectrum in fiber. Rainbows typically include six to seven distinct colors, but Brown and Thayer exhibit how they can be translated into gradations, pastels, jewel tones, and natural hues. The book encourages spinners to pull out the stash of tools and blend their way to vivid and dramatic yarns.

Napier, New Zealand: CreateSpace, 2016. Paperback, 176 pages, $33.99. ISBN 9781539545620. www.fiberygoodness.com



MODERN CROCHET MANDALAS

50+ Colorful Motifs to Crochet

by the Editors at Interweave

Whether inspired by the power of the ancient symbols or the joy of making them, crochet mandalas are all the rage. Worked in the round with symmetrical, sometimes three-dimensional patterns, the designs in *Modern Crochet Mandalas* capture the creative potential of the mandala construction. Embracing the trend of connecting spirituality with craft, crocheting mandalas can be a spiritual and mindful pursuit.

In Sanskrit, mandala means "circle" and symbolizes the universe. Each of the patterns radiates outward from the center and encapsulates a theme based on color and design elements. The crochet mandalas span the spectrum from the lacy and open "Art Nouveau" to the dense and textured "Puffs and Picots." Hooked in handspun, the designs offer an opportunity to experience a unique yarn more deeply.

Blue Ash, Ohio: Interweave, 2016. Paperback, 240 pages, $24.99. ISBN 9781632505095. www.interweave.com

SHERLOCK KNITS

Patterns Inspired by the World's Most Famous Consulting Detective

by Joanna Johnson

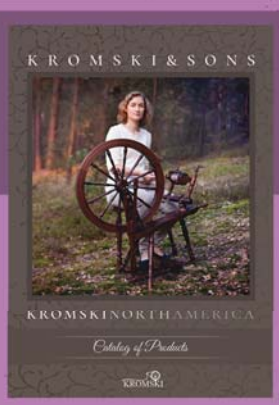


Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and other tales have long provided inspiration for stage and screen. In this latest adaptation, the Holmes mysteries serve as the muse for the knitwear designs of Joanna Johnson.

Sherlock Knits features ten projects based on the characters and cases that populate the Holmes series. Including "A Sweater for John," knitted in sturdy tweed singles, and "Speckled Band Shawl," worked in stripes of a hand-dyed fingering-weight Merino blend, these patterns could be easily adapted to use handspun yarns. Interspersed throughout the designs are quotes from Doyle's original stories and charming illustrations by Joanna's daughter, Laurel Johnson.

Loveland, Colorado: Slate Falls Press, 2016. Paperback, 48 pages, $12.95. ISBN 9780578185446. www.slatefallspressbooks.com





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LETTER

In the *Spin Off* article "How to Spin Balkan-style with a Distaff" by Bruce Engebretson and Norman Kennedy (Winter 2017, page 26), the sidebar asks, "Can someone out there find the earliest usage of the term 'drop spindle'?"

The earliest usage I found via Google Books is in *The Cultivation and Weaving of Cotton in the Prehistoric Southwestern United States* by Kate Peck Kent (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, Vol. 47, Part 3), in 1957. On page 476, the author mentions "drop-spindle spinning."

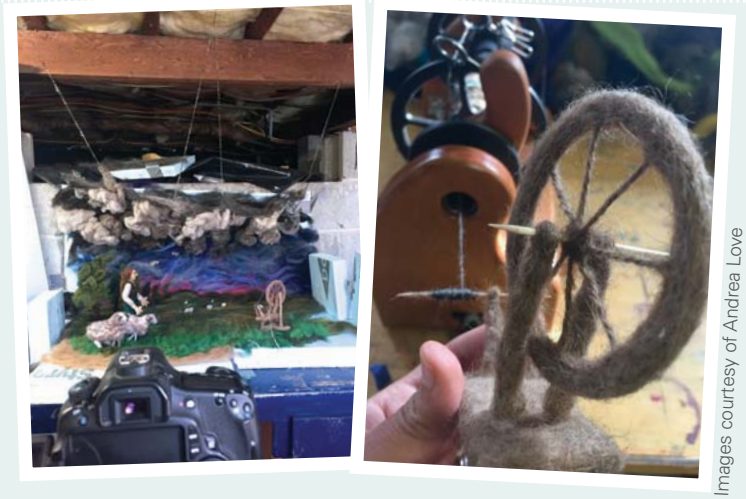
Lynn Carpenter
South Haven, Michigan

If you have comments to share with *Spin Off*, please write to *Spin Off* Letters, 4868 Innovation Drive, Fort Collins, CO 80525-5576, or email spinoff@interweave.com. Include your full name, city, and state (and country if outside the United States). All letters may be considered for publication in future issues and will be edited for space and clarity.

REVOLUTION'S EVOLUTION

Port Townsend, Washington, where HansenCrafts builds the well-known miniSpinner, is also home to stop-motion animator Andrea Love. It was just a matter of time before their paths intersected. Kevin Hansen recalls, "A year or so ago, I received an email from our hardwood supplier promoting a book on design by local author Jim Tolpin. The email pointed to an animated video called *Design by Hand and Eye*." Enchanted by the video, Kevin and his wife, Beth, reached out to Andrea, its creator. Kevin explains, "Beth and I had seen a scholarly presentation last year that traced the history of handspinning back thirty thousand years, and we thought that would be a great subject for the video." Thus, the idea for *Revolution* was born.

An avid knitter and needlefelter, Andrea was familiar with the fiber world, yet she had no experience with handspinning. The Hansens loaned Andrea a miniSpinner and taught her to spin. With wisdom from such volumes as *Respect the Spindle* by Abby Franquemont and *The Alden Amos Big Book of Handspinning* close at hand, Andrea did extensive research to flesh out the evolution of handspinning through the ages. She recalls, "I approached it like a moving piece of fiber art and dove deep into my passion for needlefelting. Animating with wool was an amazing experience and something I hope to continue exploring." Eric Andrew Kuhn's score provided further inspiration.



Images courtesy of Andrea Love

When asked what their favorite scenes are, Kevin exclaims, "All of it!" Andrea favors the finale depicting a shepherdess in a breezy field watching lightning strike a distaff. She says, "It epitomizes the magical nature of this project for me."

To view *Revolution*, visit www.hansencrafts.com. To view more of Andrea Love's stop-motion animation, visit www.andreaanimates.com.

Above left: The *Revolution* set in progress.
Right: A needlefelted spinning wheel winds on yarn from a Hansen miniSpinner.

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SOMEBODY CALL THE LAMBULANCE!







Photos by Richard Haro Photography
Images courtesy of Colorado State University

Colorado State University's Department of Veterinary Medicine provides a vital resource for the northern Colorado and southern Wyoming sheep-ranching community. One of the CSU programs is a "lambulance" service, which offers its senior veterinary students a hands-on clinical experience. Every spring during lambing season at the Warren Ranch north of Cheyenne, Wyoming, students get a firsthand look at a large-scale commercial sheep ranch. The course was started in the late 1990s by Professor Cleon Kimberling, and for over a decade, the service has been overseen by professor of livestock medicine and surgery Dr. David Van Metre. About 4,000 of the Warren Livestock Company's Warhill dams give birth to about 7,000 lambs in the spring. Students can take the elective over four to five weeks every spring, during which they witness the birth of numerous lambs and get practical experience in the field.

One of the country's top-ranked veterinary programs, the school offers veterinary field services to the region's ranchers through the teaching hospital's Livestock Medicine Service. Everything from small-scale hobby farms to large commercial ranches benefit from the CSU veterinarian program's farm visits.

Dr. Van Metre teaches students in all four years of the veterinary program, and his goal for the students' fourth year is to give them as much field experience as possible. He explains, "I try to get students out onto local farms and ranches to see as broad of a variety of livestock operations as possible—hobby, 4-H, meat, dairy, fiber, organic, the whole gamut. We do try to include in that training visits to farms with fine-wool production. We find the whole process—shearing, handspinning, coloring, processing, and marketing fiber products—to be very interesting. It is clear that the people involved in it really enjoy their work."

"Most lifelong career ranchers have enough experience in helping livestock through the birthing process that they can address most minor problems themselves. We (veterinarians) are then utilized to help with more complicated or serious problems, which tend to be relatively rare," says Dr. Van Metre. This opportunity to learn on a working farm is a way to educate not only veterinary students but also ranch workers—it is a mutually beneficial relationship.

For more information about Colorado State University's veterinary program, please visit http://csu-cvmbs.colostate.edu.

Clockwise from top left: Dr. David Van Metre, Colorado State University professor of livestock medicine and surgery, holds a lamb being examined by senior veterinary student Dalton Hindmarsh. *Above:* During a visit to Warren Ranch in Wyoming, Colorado State University veterinary student Lindsey Branscom holds a lamb as another veterinary trainee splints its deformed leg to stretch the tendons. *Bottom left:* Warren Ranch is known for developing its own breed of sheep, the Warhill, known for producing twins and quality fleece. In the lambing barn, blue numbers match newborns and ewes.

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*"Golding Gossamer"
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ratios up to 17:1*



Images courtesy of Sally Seed

For the past thirteen years, the members of the Wool Clip cooperative have organized the original British wool festival: Woolfest. Each year, hundreds of volunteers, venue staff, subcontractors, vendors, exhibitors, and fiber lovers gather at Mitchell's Lakeland Livestock Centre in Cockermouth to rejoice in all things wool. Conceived of in 2005, Woolfest was inspired by large American fiber festivals such as the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival. Since then, several other festivals have popped up around the United Kingdom in celebration of this treasured fiber.

Over the years, Woolfest has grown in its renown, even receiving a special message from the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles, in 2014. Having reached capacity, the applicants for stall and exhibition space exceed the limits of the venue each year. Organizers actively try to maintain a fresh mix of well-known and up-and-coming sellers and exhibitors. New for 2017, Woolfest plans to showcase work from Eastern and Central Europe, and they have a few more surprises up their sleeves to delight attendees. Last year, Woolfest hosted a troop of professional puppeteers, who put on a production with Herdwick sheep and Border collie dogs.

Woolfest's main emphasis has always been on highlighting rare and unusual breeds of sheep, especially those native to the British Isles. The raw-fleece sale attracts buyers from near and far, including Japan, Russia, Australia, and the United States. With the sounds of bleating sheep adding to the ambience of the festival, Woolfest is a must for spinners looking for a destination vacation.

Woolfest 2017 will be held June 23–24 (Friday and Saturday). To learn more, visit www.woolfest.co.uk.

Above: Fiber lovers under festive banners check out the vendors and exhibitors. *Below:* Valais Blacknose sheep, one of the rare breeds featured at Woolfest.





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WONDERWOOL WALES 2017

Welsh Wool and Natural Fiber on the Mountainside





Photos by Helen Babbs

Above: Handspun, handknitted sheep tea cozies. *Above right:* A crowd at the Shetland Sheep Society display. *Right:* Pedigree ewes from Home Farm Wensleydales

At the end of April, all handspinners and fiber lovers in the United Kingdom are encouraged to head to Wonderwool Wales at the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth Wells. Wonderwool is the earliest of the major British fiber festivals, timed to inspire spinners, weavers, felters, and dyers as they emerge from winter hibernation with their fiber stashes—and perhaps help replenish them. "We aim to celebrate the fun side of wool and fiber," says Sarah Stacey, one of the organizers. This celebration fills three exhibition halls with over two hundred stands, selling everything from whole fleeces to finished sweaters—and even a pattern to spin and knit your own Welsh dragon!

Wonderwool began as a government-sponsored group exhibit of local wool and sheep breeds at the Royal Welsh spring agricultural show. When the sponsorship money ended four years later, three of the exhibitors, handspinner Sarah Stacey, needlefelter Olwen Veevers, and alpaca farmer Chrissie Menzies, were reluctant to stop. They banded together and set up a company to keep the show running as an independent event. Wonderwool is now in its twelfth year and attracts over five thousand visitors each year.

"The nice thing is that it attracts people from such a wide variety of places," says Lynn Collinson of the Shetland Sheep Society. This includes not only the visitors but also the stallholders, who come from all corners of the British Isles, from Shetland to Cornwall and Suffolk to Snowdonia. With the show's origins as a showcase for British sheep, it's not surprising how many of the stands focus on rare-breed wool ranging from Boreray to Wensleydale. Some of this is even "on the hoof," such as the Cotswold ewe and lamb brought by Wonderwool regular Rob Harvey-Long from his Pickwick Cotswold flock. The Pickwick wool, and that of some of the other exhibitors such as Garthenor, supplied samples for Deborah Robson and Carol Ekarius's *Fleece and Fiber Sourcebook*.

The ethos is very much hands-on, "to let people feel the fiber." Alongside the fleeces, prepared wool, and yarns is a wide range of equipment to get your hands working, from knitting needles to drop spindles and even hand-turned spinning wheels made from individually sourced Welsh hardwoods. This could be just a giant fiber craft market, but what makes Wonderwool special is the camaraderie, as stallholders and visitors alike agree. Alice Elsworth of Whistlebare Wensleydales travels each year from the English-Scottish border, looking forward to "having people come back and show what they've knitted with our wool." To help people join in this knit-together creative spirit, a series of craft workshops runs throughout the weekend. If you prefer to work on your own project, there's a Ravelry Knitalong scheduled in the middle of each day so you can sit down and catch up with friends while fiber crafting.

More information is available on the Wonderwool website. Even those who can't come can enjoy links to all the exhibitors' websites, many of whom do online and international sales. If you want to start the spring with a revel in all things fiber, enclosed in a small but dramatic bowl of Cambrian mountains, perhaps I'll see you there.

—Helen Babbs

Wonderwool Wales 2017 will be held on April 22–23 at the Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, Powys, United Kingdom. More information is available on the website, www.wonderwoolwales.co.uk.





Carding...
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Blending Board: 12”x12” rotating stand; 108 ppsi.

Ashford Carder: Select 36, 72 or 120 ppsi; two gear ratios 4:1 and 6:1; brush attachment.

Louet: Enclosed gear; 3/8”, 1/2”, or 5/8” high teeth; staggered teeth; 36, 46, or 72 ppsi.

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My Story:

When love strikes, passion follows

LYNN ZIMMERMAN

If you give a knitter a wheel, she'll learn to spin; if you give a spinner a loom, she'll learn to weave…or so it goes for this passionate fiber artist.



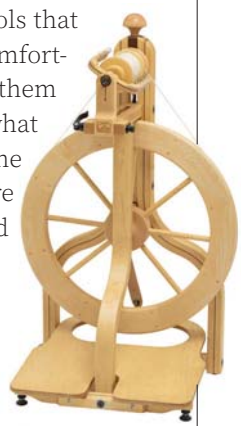
Lynn Zimmerman is a knitter, spinner, and weaver who is always looking for something new to learn, and loves to pass on her knowledge to others. She lives in Fort Collins, Colorado, and you can often find her spinning or weaving with a cat (or three) in her lap.

I started my love affair with the fiber arts as a knitter. I'd always admired projects knit in handspun yarn, but would tell myself that with so many beautiful commercially produced yarns, I didn't need to make my own. That all changed on a trip to New Zealand in 2007. I happened upon the Christchurch Spinners and Weavers Guild Shop, where the members graciously invited me to a meeting and set me up with a wheel and some wool. I was hooked.

I found Schacht shortly after my trip. I knew I wanted a wheel that was modern, beautiful, and would help me create the yarn I knew I could spin. Once I saw a Matchless, I fell in love. When I sat down to spin on one, I knew that we were meant for each other and I'd never need another wheel. However, in the years since, I have added a 40th Anniversary Cherry Matchless and a Sidekick to my stable of wheels. Each wheel has its purpose and helps me create beautiful yarn.

After I started spinning, I thought my crafting world was complete. But it seems that there's always room for one more hobby. I attended the Schacht 40th Anniversary exhibition in Boulder and I was enchanted by the beautiful handwoven items. I quickly signed up for a weaving class and came home with a Schacht Flip loom. That led to a 4-shaft Schacht Baby Wolf loom, which I eventually upgraded to an 8-shaft Baby Wolf.

I'm lucky to live near teachers who are so talented and willing to share their love of the craft. As a tribute to them, I've been fortunate enough to teach others to weave on Cricket looms. When I teach, I encourage my students to find the tools that make them feel comfortable and that allow them to focus fully on what they are creating. The Schacht tools I use are an extension of me and enhance my creativity. My Schacht wheels and looms make me a better spinner, weaver, and artist.

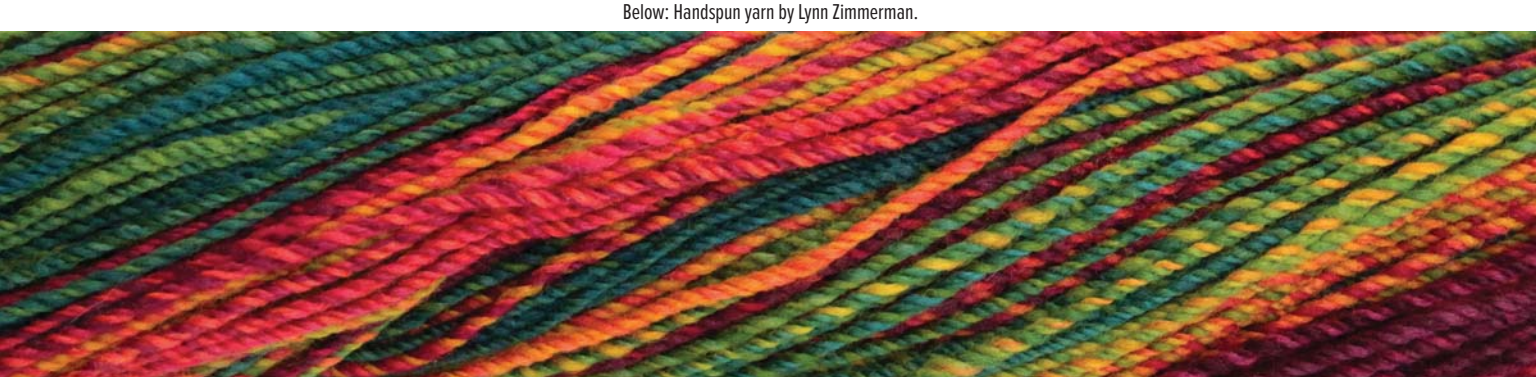


Schacht Matchless

SCHACHT®

Schacht Spindle Co., Inc. 6101 Ben Place Boulder, Colorado 80301 p. 303.442.3212 f. 303.447.9273 schachtspindle.com

Below: Handspun yarn by Lynn Zimmerman.



MAKING CHOICES

For this issue's theme—Making Choices—we requested yarns that feature the same fiber spun two different ways. Whether it was different fiber prep, drafting methods, tools, or finishing methods, we were excited to see how your choices altered the outcome of the final yarn.

① Irene Anderson of Ljungskile, Sweden

Rya wool lamb's fleece.
Terra-cotta 2-ply, 11 wpi, about 556 ypp
Soft, short fibers.
White 2-ply, 11 wpi, about 538 ypp
Strong upper coat fibers.

② Dale Jackson of Romulus, New York

Merino wool dyed with goldenrod, carded on a Pat Green carder, then pulled off through a diz.
Terra-cotta 2-ply, 8 wpi, about 469 ypp
White 2-ply, 15 wpi, about 1,788 ypp
"The wheel was set up to spin fine cotton thread. This setting was used for the finest skein (on white). For the second skein, the brake band was tightened up on the Ashford wheel to spin a thicker yarn (on terra-cotta). Both skeins were washed to set the twist and dried without weight."

③ Shirley Lyster of Powell River, British Columbia, Canada

Handcarded Cheviot.
Terra-cotta 2-ply, 20 wpi, about 1,816 ypp
Green rolag, spun supported with point-of-contact draw.
White 2-ply, 10 wpi, about 778 ypp
Carded fiber, rolled off handcard sideways, attenuated, then spun with a worsted draw.
"I chose to spin a Cheviot fleece, as it was the one raw fleece I have right now. I am a fan of spinning to the crimp, that is, spinning a 2-ply yarn with the same number of bumps per inch as there are crimps per inch in the fleece. This Cheviot fleece had 11 to 13 crimps per inch.
"The first sample I spun on a ratio of 8.5:1; the results produced about 7½ plied twists per inch (tpi). This yarn proved to be harsh and wiry but very elastic. I knitted a small sample with cables and yarnovers, and it shows the cables and holes very nicely. I wouldn't use this in a garment worn next to the skin! The next sample was spun on a ratio of 6:1. My draw length remained the same, as did the number of treadles per inch, and the yarn has about 5 plied tpi. My draft width was wider, and the yarn created is loftier and bulkier than the first. The small sample I knitted with this yarn is coarse, and with this, I would only knit outer garments, such as mitts and hats and maybe a cardigan. Before this challenge, I had spun this same fiber with a long draw at a 4.5:1 ratio and with two fewer treadles per draft. The short fibers didn't all get caught in the twist, and the cardigan I knitted with it tends to pill a lot. This leads me to the conclusion that this fiber might be best spun at 8.5:1 or 6:1 with fewer treadles to create a more softly twisted yarn. I still have lots of fleece left and have wanted to create a softly knitted indoor sweater, one that can be worn next to the skin. I think I still need to experiment with it!"

④ Selah Barling of Seattle, Washington

Dicentra Designs 100% Bluefaced Leicester in the Geneva colorway.
Terra-cotta 2-ply, 10 wpi, about 594 ypp
S-spun and Z-plied on a Louet DT 75.
"I won the roving at the spinner's triathlon at OFFF [Oregon Flock and Fiber Festival]. This yarn, with the deliberate 'damn-its,' makes me think of those paper beads that you build by dipping in glue and rolling between your fingers."
White 3-strand crêpe, 11 wpi, about 538 ypp
2 plies S-spun on a Louet DT 75 then plied Z, and singles Z-spun on a handmade drop spindle; both twisted again S.
"This yarn is similar in construction to crêpe yarn but looks to me more like a fine necklace chain. Either yarn would be fun to weave with as a weft or to crochet."

⑤ Carol Phillpott of North Canterbury, Kent, England

Suri alpaca.
Terra-cotta 2-ply, 16 wpi, about 704 ypp
Spun on a Turkish spindle.
"Beautiful soft fleece. I washed it after plying. Easy to spin."
White 2-ply, 13 wpi, about 680 ypp
Spun on a Majacraft Little Gem spinning wheel.
"A dream to spin and quicker than the spindle."

NEXT CHALLENGE

The theme for the Fall 2017 Your Yarns is "Spin Your Fibershed." In the *Spin Off* Winter 2017 issue, we featured several articles on spinning local. We invite you to choose fibers from your region. Tell us a bit about where the fiber came from and why you selected it. The deadline to submit is **April 15, 2017.**

Please send a minimum of one five-yard length of yarn labeled with your name, mailing address, phone number, and email address. Please note the fiber content, wraps per inch (wpi), and yards per pound (ypp) and tell us a bit about your yarn submission. Mail your comments and your yarn to *Spin Off* Your Yarns, 4868 Innovation Drive, Fort Collins, CO 80525-5576. Email spinoff@interweave.com with any questions. The yarn won't be returned, but it will be used 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 Yarns entries.


①
②
③
④
⑤

Some Majacraft dealers you can talk to

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Grandma's Spinning Wheel
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spinningramma@aol.com
www.grandmasspinningwheel.

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Ph 765 569-2953
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www.fibercloset.com

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majacraft

all you need to spin your dreams

pioneer

Spinning is an art, learned and perfected over time, and just like in any other 'art', spinners need the right tools to craft their dreams, the right instrument to play their fibre music. As a spinner you long for the wheel that will become an intuitive part of your creative expression and allows you the ease and freedom to expand your spinning dreams into your own unique art. This is just as true if you are looking for an 'entry level' wheel, if not more so, because you want your wheel to grow with you!



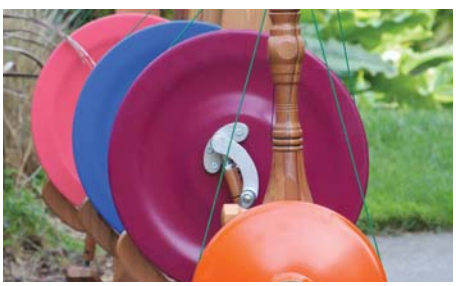
The Pioneer is the Majacraft entry wheel, the lowest priced of our range, but we are very proud of this wheel for the quality and spin experience it offers, one that equals our other higher priced wheels!

While we have kept the Pioneer simple, with a basic slimmed down construction, this wheel spins as smooth as silk, we have not compromised on any of the quality components you can expect in a Majacraft wheel.

This is also a wheel that will expand along with your skills, you can mix and match bobbins and flyers, swap pulleys to suit any kind of spinning, from art yarns to laceweight and traditional. Most of our accessories will fit this wheel so you can expand the range of spinning you can do with it very easily.

This is the ideal beginners wheel, solid, reliable, and built to last. It is also the ideal wheel for advanced spinners because of its versatility and quality. This wheel is one of our unsung heroes! You can customise the Pioneer if you wish, with your own art, or select a custom colour from our website and have your wheel created unique to you!





With Majacraft spinning wheels and fibre preparation tools, you will be able to create the beautiful yarns you dream of. Visit your Majacraft dealer to talk about the Pioneer and other Majacraft equipment, they will be delighted to help you on your fibre journey.

Majacraft Ltd - 586 Oropi Road - RD.3 - Tauranga 3173 - New Zealand
phone +64 7 543-3618 - email support@majacraft.co.nz - web www.majacraft.co.nz



Photo by George Boe

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

A Traditional Spinner Cuts Loose at Yarn Fest

by Denise Renee Grace

Through generous contributions from participants and vendors, scholarships have been available for Interweave yarn events for decades. In 2016, our latest event, Interweave Yarn Fest, offered six scholarships for classes in crochet, knitting, spinning, and weaving. Denise Renee Grace was selected for a scholarship in weaving but took a number of spinning classes.

• • •

During fiber events, I am used to being a Schacht girl, spending time in the Schacht Spindle Company booth sharing information about the tools I love. But when I got a scholarship for Yarn Fest 2016, I was excited to be a fiber girl: just a gal who is crazy about fiber—a participant. I wanted to use this opportunity to really expand my spinning knowledge.

There were so many class choices, but I figured I would focus on the wild side. I have dabbled in wild fiber preparations and art yarn before, but it is not my comfort zone. That led me to classes with Jillian Moreno and Esther Rodgers (aka Jazz Turtle) in preparing fiber for textured yarn, spinning batts and handpainted top, creating textured yarns, and plying. Each class provided a lot of fiber to experiment with in class, but the instructors also sent us home with fabulous fiber to play with—everything from batts to hand-dyed long locks to variegated top and more.

After the weekend was over, I was a little overwhelmed by the awesome information. I felt like I had to let it sink in a bit. When some time had passed, I got out my box of new fiber and practiced everything on the list of techniques I had been taught, to find the ones that I like. I made a small amount of yarn to represent each technique. As I explored the techniques, I remembered the teachers, fellow students, trials of learning, words, and laughter shared. Class time was an intimate and special bonding time. One of the most memorable things from the weekend was Esther talking about "story yarn," yarn that not only tells a story but also takes the components of a scenario, event, or person and puts them into a tactile and visual representation in the form of a skein or project.

IT'S IN THE BAG

With the small amounts of sample yarn, I could only make a small project. Being a bagmaker, I knew a small bag would be perfect to showcase the different types of yarn. I got the idea for this small bag to be my YarnFest "story bag," putting in all the fiber, skills, and fun that the weekend offered.

In the fiber-prep class, I made something on every tool available—blending board, wide drumcarder, art yarn drumcarder, hackles, and handcards—and took home samples of each preparation to spin up. I made a fat "fiber sandwich" with locks, bits of ribbon, noils, and other weird things, and ran it through the carder. I found it fascinating to make such textured yarn. The resulting yarn is mostly what I used in this bag, sprinkled with a bit of yarn from the batt-spinning class.

For the warp, I chose a muted sportweight silk yarn from my stash that complemented the flamboyant colors of the sample yarns. Usually sportweight yarns are best in a 10-dent reed for balanced plain weave, but I used an 8-dent reed to make a weft-dominant fabric because the wild yarn is thicker than the sportweight yarn. I warped a width of 7½" in the reed.

After weaving a strip of fabric, I sewed it together with the warp yarn, put in a batik liner and pocket on the back, sewed three lines of decorative yarn onto the flap, and made a strap. The strap was actually one of my favorite elements: I got out my rope machine and made a strap out of the interesting textured art yarn, then attached it to the side of the bag. I wasn't sure that I liked the bag each step of the way, but I just kept going, and I ended up liking the finished product!





Top: Denise (far left) studies with Jillian Moreno. Above: In Esther Rodgers's fiber-prep class, Denise (right) explores the tools. Photos by Hannah Fourman

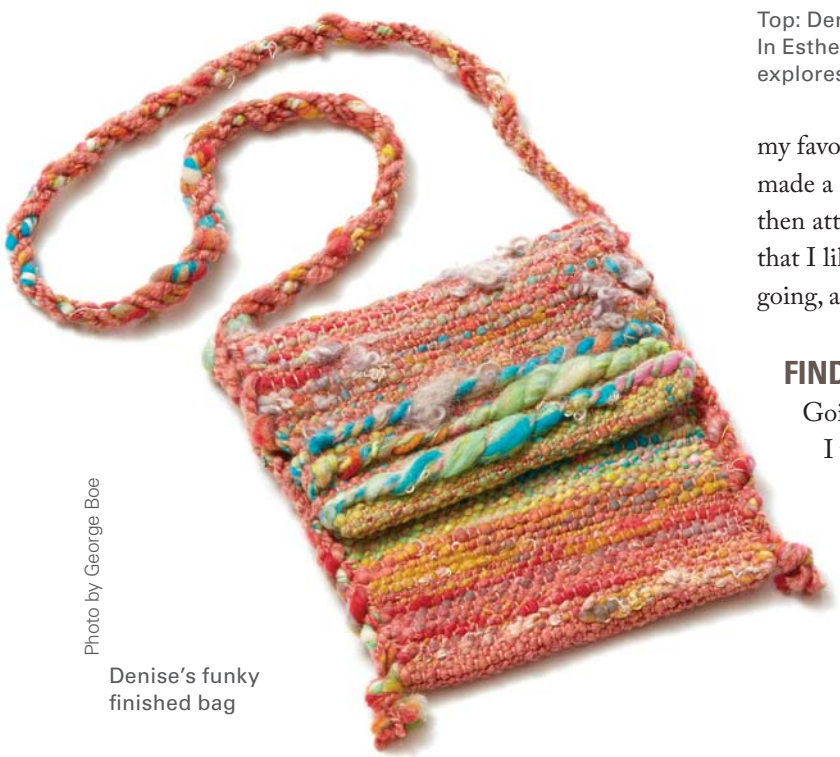


Photo by George Boe

Denise's funky finished bag

FINDING MY PLACE

Going out of my comfort zone with these classes, I was able to make this exciting bag with all of the fond memories, skills that I learned, and everything that I realized about myself as a fiber artist infused in the "story bag." Being steeped in an environment of fiber rock stars, enthusiasts, manufacturers, and shop owners was so valuable to my growth

as a fiber artist. There were so many choices at Yarn Fest that it was both overwhelming and exhilarating. It allowed me to delve into my voice in the fiber community.

I headed home to further inquire into the possibilities of what I have to give. As I spun the yarn for this bag, I cultivated a new love for my wild side. I usually gravitate toward neutral colors of highly crimped fleece, stunning silks, and cotton in natural colors. This world of neon colors, hand-dyed locks, glitter, and art batts stretched my comfort zone, but I found out that I love that, too. It might not become my default, but it allowed me to see a different side of myself.

Creating this story bag was an experience that I would never have had without going to Yarn Fest. I saw so many choices of what people love, different fiber and tools offered, and techniques taught. I was able to reflect on it and start to hear my voice come forth. Yarn Fest provides a place for all fiber lovers to come together and rediscover themselves as creators, and that is priceless.

Denise's Most Valuable Lessons from Yarn Fest

- Choose classes that make you uncomfortable.
- Be a sponge, soaking up everything possible that the class and teacher have to offer.
- Let it go for a bit after the classes and then revisit the techniques learned, trying each of them.
- Go to the marketplace often to find treasures and good ideas.

Denise Renee Grace is a maven of mechanics when it comes to fiber tools, specializing in the inner workings of looms and spinning wheels. She is a maker and plows through projects with excitement and determination. A lover of all fiber arts, if Denise had to choose her favorite, it would be spinning. Find her at www.filamentfiberart.com, www.etsy.com/shop/filamentfiberart, and her Instagram handle, filamentfiberarts.

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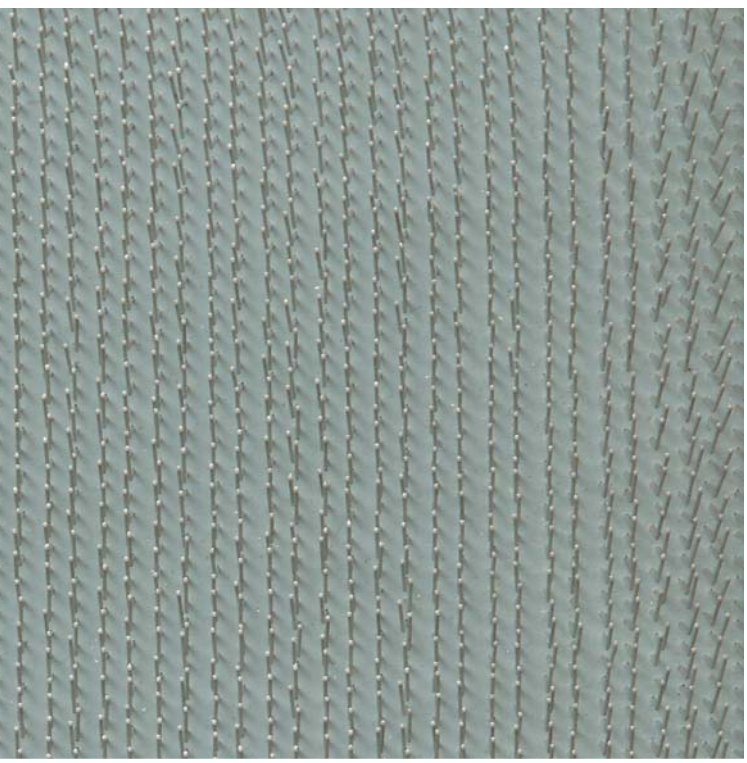
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UNDERSTANDING CARDING CLOTH

by Esther Rodgers





Howard Brush 190 tpi carding cloth donated by www.cardingcloth.com. Photos by George Boe

Q. I want to invest in carding equipment, but there are several choices. Don't they all do the same thing? How do I know what I need?

A. Choosing the right tool for carding can be intimidating. The first thing to do is figure out what you want to use it for. Decide what fiber result you want and then you can choose the tool you need to match your goal.

Carding cloth is the toothed material on handcards, drumcarders, flick carders, and blending boards. Although the tools aren't exactly interchangeable, they do serve related functions: to open, blend, and generally arrange fiber.

The most important factor in choosing a carding tool is the carding cloth's teeth per inch (tpi). Tpi measures how densely the teeth are packed together. That density in turn determines how much texture is removed and how much color is blended in a single pass. The higher the number, the finer the carding cloth and the more smooth and blended the fiber becomes. Think of tpi as it applies to a hairbrush: If you have fine hair, you use a brush with lots of bristles close together. This gives a smooth finish. When you have curly hair, you use a wide-tooth comb or a brush with stiff bristles that are far apart. These bristles leave the curls together rather than separating and smoothing them out.

With this in mind, you can determine which carding tool is right for you. If you want to card smooth, lofty batts and rolags with little to no texture or blend fibers and colors together thoroughly, then a fine-tooth carder (tpi of 120 and above or 90 and above for a blending board) is the one for you. Fine fibers are best used on high-tpi carding equipment. To card more textured or coarser fiber on a tool with a high tpi measurement, it is important to pick open the fiber first. With a high-tpi drumcarder, fiber

should be carded in thin layers (see "Make Your Drumcarder Your Friend for Life," page 60). When texture is desired, it is best to add it directly to the top of a drumcarder, bypassing the tray and licker-in. Multiple passes of fiber on a high-tpi carding tool will blend colors and fibers smoothly and evenly.

For most uses, including carding most wool, carding cloth with a tpi measurement around 72 is a happy medium. It can accommodate a range of fiber diameters, create somewhat textured fiber preparations, and blend and smooth moderately fine batts.

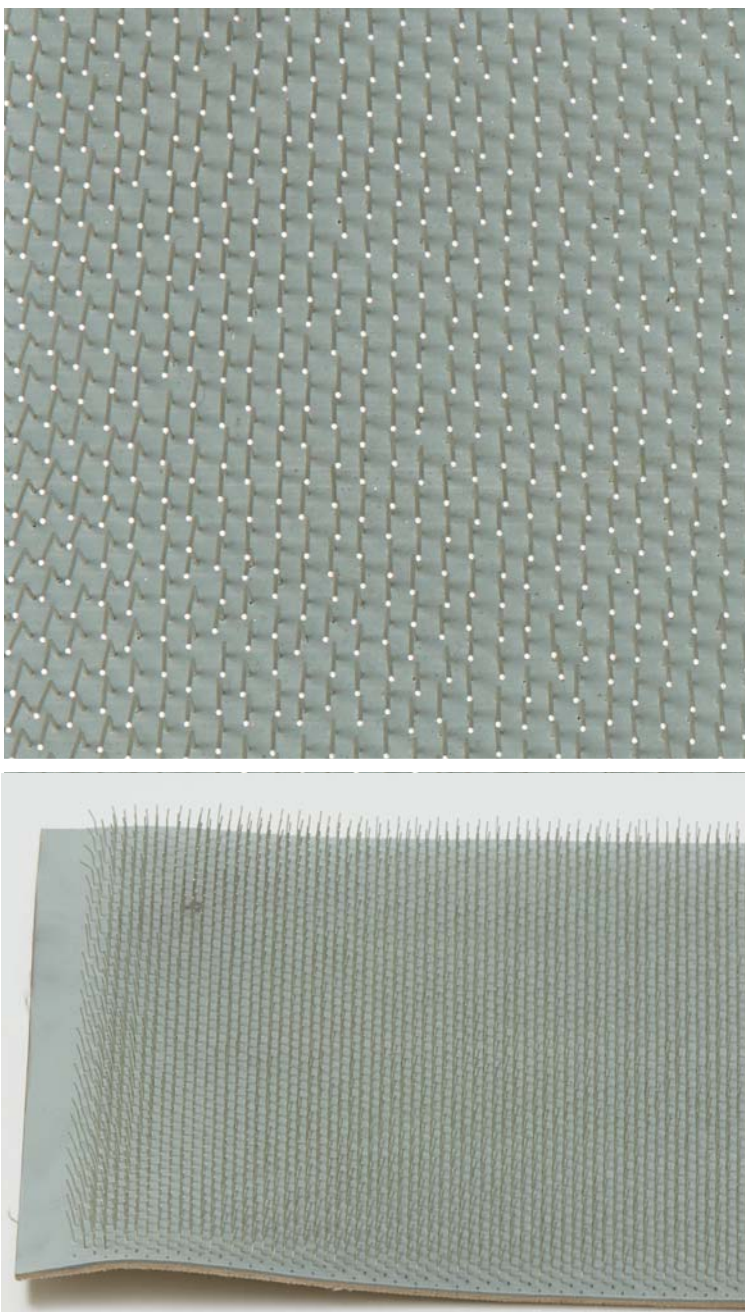
To keep lots of texture in the fibers and blend loosely, a coarse cloth is what you are looking for. A tpi of 50 and lower will give you a chunky, textured batt. If you are carding multiple kinds of fiber together, you will get bold variations on a single pass. Multiple passes are necessary to blend, and the blending tends to be less even and smooth. (Although coarse and textured fibers are best carded on low-tpi carders, fine fibers can also be carded on equipment with less dense carding cloth.) Because there is more space between the teeth, there is more room for textured fiber or funky inclusions.

Tool Type

Next, you need to determine which type of tool will work best for you. There are ways to use each tool to make batts, rolags, and roving; you'll just get a much smaller batt from a handcard than from a drumcarder.

If you are processing small amounts of fiber or are on a budget, a pair of handcards is perfect. They come in different tpi options (from 54 to 225). Some come with curved backs, some flat; it's a matter of personal preference.

Blending boards are perfect for someone who doesn't have space for a drumcarder. They are wonderfully portable. It's easier to control the size and composition of rolags carded on a blending



Howard Brush 90 tpi carding cloth donated by www.cardingcloth.com.

Flat or Curved?

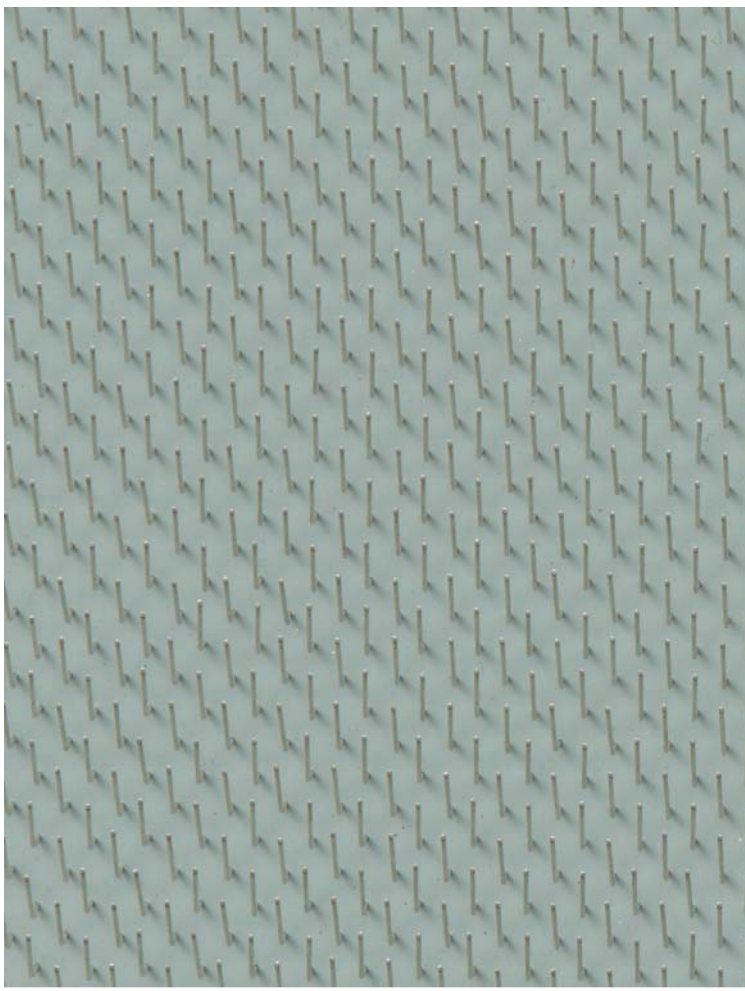
Carding cloth applied to a curved surface such as a drumcarder or curved-back handcards behaves a bit differently than when it's attached to a flat blending board or handcards. When the carding cloth is flexed, more space opens between the teeth, revealing more surface for the fiber to fill. Try out flat and curved tools to see which ones meet your needs.

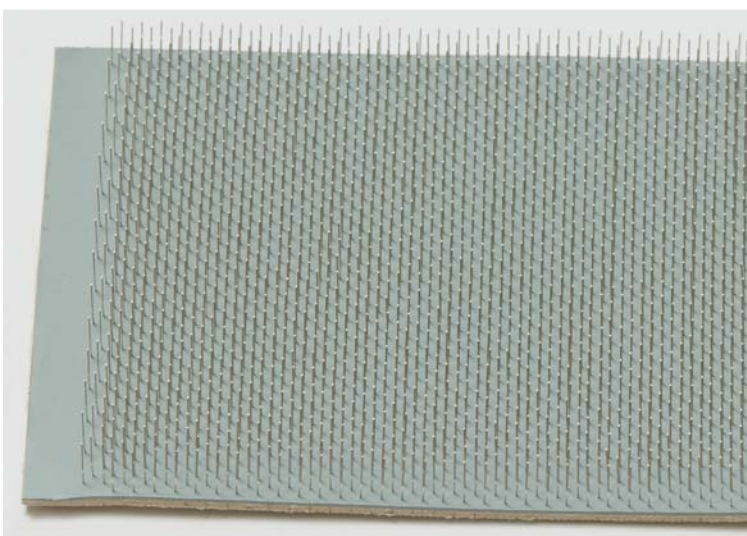
board than on a drumcarder because you're working with less fiber. A blending board is flat, so even when carding fine fibers, it is best not to go above 90 tpi. With more teeth on a flat surface, it can be hard to get fiber to catch and fill; it tends to stay on the surface.

A drumcarder is the largest investment, but it also gives you the most options. With a drumcarder, you can process fiber much faster as well as create fiber preparations from stripes to blends. Layers carded into a batt with a low-tpi carding tool can be thicker and not picked out at all before going into the tray of a drumcarder. Texture can be added to the main drum of a drumcarder (I prefer it), and the licker-in can accommodate uneven elements.

Carding tools all do the same fundamental tasks, but they go about those tasks slightly differently. Once you know what you want to achieve, you should be able to figure out which tool and tpi will meet your needs.

Esther Rodgers is a full-time fiber artist and wool sniffer. She lives in Mebane, North Carolina, with her husband, three spinning wheels, multiplying looms, and two chatty cats. Her videos *Card Wool for Color* and *How to Spin Art Yarns* are available from Interweave. To follow her ridiculous schedule, find a workshop, or look into her studio, visit www.jazzturtle.com.





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Learn More

Card Wool for Color video by Esther Rodgers
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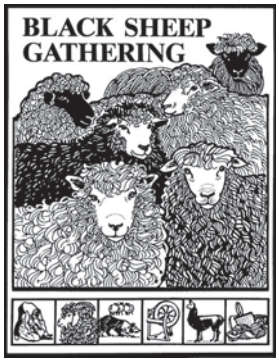
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Illustrations by Katie Eberts

START YOUR SPINNING
on the Right Foot

by Carol Leonard

Every spinner is faced with decisions. Let's take a look at the most fundamental.

WHEELS UP!

I have taught spinning for many years now, and the question that I am most often asked by new spinners is, "What sort of wheel would be best for me?"

Let us assume that we are talking about your very first wheel. It may be that at this point there is no choice to be made because if you have been given or inherited a wheel, that is where you will start. But if you have been attending a class or using a borrowed wheel and have fallen hopelessly in love with spinning (as you do!), then you do need to find your very first spinning wheel.

And I can't tell you which one it should be.

That might seem a little mean, but all the modern wheels that I am aware of are great, each with a whole lot to recommend it—yet each has different features and attributes. A decision must be made, and the only person who can make that final choice is you.

Option 1: Shiny New Wheel

Perhaps you are fortunate and can afford to go out and buy a brand-new wheel. The best advice a spinning teacher can give you is to try as many as possible. Maybe your teacher has a number of different wheels for students to learn on in class—try them all. If you have a guild or spinning group near you, go along as a visitor and ask nicely if any members are prepared to

talk to you about their wheels and let you have a go. Find your nearest vendor or fiber show, treat yourself to a lovely day out, and sample yet more wheels.

There are things that you can consider:

•Do you have any physical issues that might make a difference?

Something as simple as being tall or short might mean that you would prefer a wheel with a higher or lower orifice/flyer.

•How portable do you want your wheel to be?

This is one of the big questions these days, as so many of us travel to workshops and shows.

•Do you want your flyer to be on the left or right of the wheel, or would an upright work better for you?

Ask yourself these sorts of questions as you learn to spin and talk to as many people as possible. If you don't have a group nearby, see what online forums you can find (try Facebook and Ravelry) and ask questions there.

Option 2: Pre-loved Wheel

Many of us only have the budget for a pre-loved wheel, and there's nothing wrong with that. I actually think it is a good idea to go for this anyway; no matter how much research you do, your first purchase could turn out not to be a lifetime favorite!

Still, you should probably follow most of the recommendations for buying a new wheel. Previously owned wheels can be tracked down via many of the same sources, plus one or two more, which may depend on where you live. Taking eBay as an example available to most of us, proceed with some caution. It is extremely difficult to see what a wheel is really like just from a photograph. If the price is low, it may be worth taking a gamble, but it is not a safe option! The same goes for bargain finds in antiques or secondhand shops. Try out the wheel for yourself before purchasing and enlist a more experienced friend to help out if at all possible.

(I am setting spindles aside for the purposes of this article, as they need and deserve an entire volume on their own!)

YOUR FIRST FIBER BUY

You have learned to spin; you have acquired your first wheel. You have spun fiber provided by your teacher and maybe by friends. Now it is time to be brave and step out on your own into the world of stash acquisition!

Are you going to spin fleece or prepared fiber? (Don't panic; in due course you will be able to get around to All of the Fibers.)

Option 1: Fleecy Goodness

Perhaps you know someone who has sheep or you have some other good source for fleece. I would put similar caveats on buying fleece as I would on buying a secondhand wheel: it is easy to get something that is not so good if you don't know what you're looking at. You will also have to prepare your fiber in some way. (No room for discussion of fiber-prep tools here, either, except to say that a simple dog comb can cope with most of your needs.) If you do decide to go for fleece, choose something with medium staple length rather than a fiber that is very long or very short. There will be time for those later.

Option 2: The Panoply of Prepared Fibers

For these reasons, I tend to advocate for my students sticking with prepared fibers for a while, but I suspect that I will get a lot of disagreement for saying that. I have come across more than one person who has learned to spin, acquired a wheel, then paid a visit to one of the larger fiber suppliers and bought small quantities of many different fibers. I think this is a brilliant idea. Even if you do struggle with one fiber, or make a less good yarn than you would like, it is all an excellent learning process. One of my students did this between one lesson and the next. From an uneasy beginner spinner at one session, she came to the next drafting fluently and producing a very nice yarn, with nothing but a range of fibers and practice in between.

I often hear people saying that they will not try spinning something such as cashmere because they will only make a mess of it, not being good enough yet. My response is, "Go for it anyway!" You might not make it the very first new fiber you try—I would say the same about cotton—but don't be afraid of taking that extra step. You only learn and grow as a craftsperson by giving it a whirl (whorl?).



WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO WHEELS

So there you are, spinning away, your stash growing only marginally faster than your expertise. Lumpy bumpy yarn is a thing of the past. There are new things you want to try: very fine yarns on one hand, funky art yarns on the other. It is not an impossibility that your thoughts turn toward considering that you might need another wheel.

Not every spinner does this. I have come across a few who have stayed true to their first love. But let's be honest; most of us can come up with a justification for either replacing that original wheel or taking the first step to becoming a multiwheel household. I can't think of any one wheel that covers everything you might want in one package, if you include everything that you might look for.

New wheels come on the market all the time, and one of the more recent developments is the popularity of the electric spinner. This, I think, has been my final choice. My knees are not as young as they used to be, and neither is my back, so carrying a lot of weighty equipment around is not appealing. Electric spinners are as light and as portable as we have . . . so far.



Option 1: Build Your Range of Ratios

Why should you choose to have more than one wheel? Mainly to facilitate the wide range of yarns—thicker, thinner, textured—that you can spin. As our skills improve, there are various factors we can consider: the function of different ratios, for one thing. If your first wheel was one with only three ratios, it is likely that you could need to extend that. It depends on what you like to spin, not only the type of yarn you like to produce, but also the range of fibers to try. If you are falling in love with silk or cotton, then you need a wheel with high ratios available; if you want to spin bulky or art yarns, you need bigger bobbins and should consider whether a delta rather than a traditional orifice might suit your purposes better.

Option 2: More Treadles

If your first wheel was not a brand-new one, it might only have a single treadle. Try a double treadle and see how that feels. Most people find double treadles easier on the body. They are more efficient of effort and, I believe, make it easier to control the speed at which you are spinning, something that becomes an important factor when moving to thicker or thinner yarns.

I have been spinning for many years, and it is my belief that we are fortunate enough to be living in a golden age! The choices of equipment and fiber available to us are as great as I have known, and the opportunities for improving our skills either formally or informally are the best they have ever been. Let's dive in with informed abandon and embrace the choices!

Carol Leonard has been addicted to fiber and spinning for many years and is well known as a teacher in the United Kingdom. She lives in a stone-built cottage in West Yorkshire with her spinning and weaving husband and a collection of Snowshoe cats. Her collection of wheels outnumbers her housemates, and their joint collection of spindles probably outnumbers the population of their neighborhood.

Resources

Tyler, Amy. "Ask a Spinning Teacher: Wheel Configuration." *Spin Off*, Winter 2017, pp. 20–22.

Martin, Linda. "Tips for Buying an Antique or Secondhand Wheel." *Spin Off*, Fall 2017, pp. 62–66.

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How Many Ways Can You Make a GRADIENT YARN?

by Cindy Craft



In the past, I have created gradient yarns by dyeing my handspun, but following a dye workshop and an online discussion about blending on a drumcarder, I decided to explore a different path. Using blending and dyeing techniques, I wondered, how many ways could I spin a gradient yarn for a matching pair of socks?

Method 1

I began with a Corriedale fleece, then chose a gradient from purple to neon yellow with teal in the middle. I chose to spin singles for the socks and crank them on a circular sock machine.

Weigh a pair of handmade socks that you'd like to emulate. Divide the wool needed for a pair of socks (plus a little for a fudge factor) into five equal piles by weight, then dye each of the piles. You can use two colors or a whole rainbow between the beginning and ending colors.

Card each of the piles separately, creating five batts of graduating color.

Divide each of the five batts in two, one for each sock. Weigh each of the ten piles of fiber; they should all be equal, and the total should be the same as your already-knitted handspun socks. If it's not, remove some fiber. (Because of the fudge factor, you should have plenty of wool in total.) To spin a plied yarn, divide each sock's share of batts into as many piles as you plan plies.

You can spin each color in the gradient, creating the yarn for one sock; or you can draft each color and card them all onto the drumcarder, creating a single large rolag that you can spin from one end to the other. (I got the idea from a Ravelry forum to card each of the stripes onto the drum side by side, then roll a multicolored batt off the drum wrapped around a pair of dowels to make an oversized rolag, but I found it more difficult to spin than each of the original batts individually.) I left the yarn as singles and cranked a pair of toe-up socks on a circular sock machine.



① 100% purple (dyed) ② 50% purple, 50% teal (carded) ③ 100% teal (dyed) ④ 50% teal, 50% yellow (carded) ⑤ 100% yellow (dyed)

Dyed Fleece to Nine Batts

Method 2

I was unhappy with the abruptness of the color changes in my first socks, so I decided to try to create a yarn with more gradual transitions. Method 2 uses a range of fiber-preparation tools. Start from the same wool dyed in the same colors as Method 1, then use handcards to create four additional colors in between the five original colors. This creates nine colors in the gradient, which means recalculating how much of each color fiber you need.

With nine colors for each sock, divide the total weight of your target pair of socks by eighteen to determine how much of each color you need. The four colors that were blended on the handcards were each made of 50% (or 1/36th of the total weight of socks) of the color above in the gradient and 50% of the color below in the gradient. The resulting socks have a more gradual shift in color and are more appealing, in my opinion.

As you look at the four colors that were blended on the handcards compared to the five colors that were dyed, it's hard to tell which technique produced which effect. This idea of blending instead of dyeing led me to Method 3.







① 100% purple (dyed) ② 50% purple (dyed); 25% purple, 25% teal (carded) ③ 50% purple, 50% teal (carded) ④ 50% teal (dyed); 25% purple, 25% teal (carded) ⑤ 100% teal ⑥ 50% teal (dyed); 25% teal, 25% yellow (carded) ⑦ 50% teal, 50% yellow (carded) ⑧ 50% yellow (dyed); 25% teal, 25% yellow (carded) ⑨ 100% yellow (dyed)

Method 3

This method eliminates the dyeing.

Start with two colors: here, a white Dorset Down roving and a blue unnamed wool roving. Blend different proportions of the two fibers to create five colors for the gradient.

Two Rovings to Five Batts



1. 100% blue
2. 75% blue, 25% white
3. 50% blue, 50% white
4. 25% blue, 75% white
5. 100% white

Method 4

This method eliminates the fiber preparation. I chose Tunis roving and three dye colors, purple, royal blue, and teal, using less dye per weight of fiber than in Method 1 to create a less-saturated color.

Weigh out five piles of roving, each one-fifth of the finished weight of a pair of socks. Dye each pile with a different combination of the gradient colors. The resulting sock had a fairly smooth gradient with the exception of the purple to purple/blue blend.

1. 100% teal
2. 50% teal, 50% royal blue
3. 100% teal royal blue
4. 50% royal blue, 50% purple
5. 100% purple





FINAL THOUGHTS

I drew several conclusions from the four methods. The first is pretty obvious if you think about it: The more steps in the gradient, the smoother the color transition will be. A nine-step gradient is smoother than a five-step gradient. The second is that transitioning from a light color to a dark color requires more shades than transitioning from one dark color to another to achieve a smooth gradient. The third is that blending colors with fiber-preparation tools or by dyeing is equally effective for creating a particular color. This was a surprise to me; I had expected that the blended fiber would appear more heathered and that I'd be able to see the two colors that I'd blended.

Cindy Craft is a spinner, knitter, knitting-pattern designer, felter, cranker, dyer, and soapmaker, among other things. Cindy and her daughters make up Subito Farm. Find their handmade items at www.subitofarm.com and at fiber shows throughout the Northeast.

Learn More
***Card Wool for Color* video**
with Esther Rodgers
www.interweave.com



Photos by George Boe

THE RIGHT SPINDLE

for the Job

by Connie Kephart

I love spindles. I love the materials they're made of, I love the many hook shapes, and I love the incredible variety of whorls. I confess I often buy spindles based solely on their looks. It has taken me many years, and many failed spindle projects, to learn that I need to look more at the properties of my spindle, my fiber, and the project itself rather than the spindle's appearance. Unfortunately, picking a spindle and fiber that look really good together just isn't enough to ensure success (but it's fun to do when you're spinning just to spin!). Now when it's time to spin, I look at my spindles for what they really are: tools. And that's how you should look at them as well, because no matter how stunning that bloodwood whorl is or how smooth that cherry shaft feels, in the end you want a spindle that will work for you.

HOW DO YOU PICK THE RIGHT SPINDLE?

I start by asking myself some questions about the whole project.

- Do I want a woolen-spun or worsted-spun singles? You might find that long draw works better with a supported spindle, but plenty of people double-draft and spin long draw with a high-whorl or bottom-whorl spindle, so don't let this answer limit your spindle choice. If I want the most woolen-spun singles I can make, I'll choose a supported spindle. Anything resembling a worsted-style singles means I'll use an unsupported (suspended) spindle.
- Will my finished yarn be a singles, or am I planning to ply? If I'm planning a two-ply yarn, I'll use two similar spindles, then ply directly from the spindles.
- What weight yarn am I making? There is some truth to the idea that big spindles make big yarn and small spindles make small yarn. I think this is really due to big yarn creating bigger cops and therefore needing a bigger spindle with a longer shaft to hold the bigger cop. The inverse holds for the smaller yarn/smaller spindle. You'll also hear that a spinner can spin anything on any size spindle, and while it's true you could, why would you

want to do extra work forcing the spindle into a job it isn't suited for?

- What fiber am I spinning? Do I need a lot of twist or just enough twist to hold the fiber together? If I need lots of twist, I want a fast-spinning spindle that introduces enough twist when paired with my default drafting rate. If I'm making a low-twist singles, a slower spindle means I can still draft at my default rate, but the spindle (the tool!) introduces less twist.
- Am I spinning a lot of fiber or just a small amount? I'm not a fan of knots in my yarn, so I choose a longer shaft to get more yardage per cop.
- Where will I be doing my spinning? I rarely consider where I'll be spinning because I'll travel with any of my spindles. If you'll be traveling or spinning wherever and whenever you can, you might want to use a low-whorl spindle with a half hitch so you don't worry about damaging the hook. (You might also want to save your precious—high-cost or very special—spindles for controlled, carpeted areas to prevent an unfortunate chip or break.)



Mid-whorl Maggie spindle, www.magpiewoodworksusa.com



Rim-weighted True Creations spindle, www.tcspindles.com



Evenly weighted SpindleWood spindle, www.spindlewoodco.com

If you want to make	I recommend
① mittens from a worsted-weight, medium-twist, 3-ply yarn	a mid-whorl spindle. It has a slight rim for a long, not-too-fast spin and a shaft long enough to easily hold 2 to 3 ounces of singles.
② a sweater from a sportweight, high-twist, 2-ply yarn	a high-whorl spindle with a long shaft, either rim weighted or evenly weighted. I want a hard-wearing yarn, so a fast-spinning spindle will produce the amount of twist I want.

MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Now that we know what the job is, let's review basic spindle anatomy. A spindle consists of at least two, and possibly three, parts: a whorl, a shaft, and, optionally, a hook. Picking a spindle with just one slightly less-than-perfect part can sabotage your spinning project. I've done it more times then I'm willing to admit. (I'll share my most common failure: I've used three spindles to make a three-ply yarn but have taken only the weight of the spindles into account and ignored the whorl shape.)

Whorl

Whorls come in so many shapes! Every whorl, though, is one of three basic shapes: center weighted, rim weighted, and what I'll call evenly weighted. The rule of thumb is that center-weighted whorls spin long but not necessarily fast; rim-weighted whorls spin fast but not necessarily long. The evenly weighted whorls fall anywhere in between; in my experience, the material of the whorl determines the speed and spin time.



Loki spindle, www.greensleevesspindles.com



Tahkli, www.cottonclouds.com



Russian spindle, www.grippingyarn.com

If you want to make	I recommend
③ silk embroidery thread with high twist and at least 3 plies	a spindle with a high, center-weighted whorl. When the whorl is made from heavier woods, it helps pull the silk fibers down as the twist is added, for incredibly smooth, tightly spun, shiny singles.
④ superfine cashmere yarn for knitting lace or weaving	a tahkli or Russian spindle. These are fast spindles when used with a low-friction surface such as metal or porcelain, and they will produce the high twist needed to hold short fibers together. Supported spindles are also your best choice for producing a woolen-spun yarn because you dedicate one hand to the spindle, leaving only one hand to manage the fiber source.



Bosworth rim-weighted Midi spindle, www.journeywheel.com



High-whorl Bare Bones spindle, www.greensleevesspindles.com



Low-whorl Peruvian spindle, www.clothroads.com

The whorl can also be positioned anywhere along the length of the shaft. I know of one spindle maker who makes top-whorl, high-whorl, mid-whorl, low-whorl, and bottom-whorl spindles! In general, though, you'll find three whorl positions: high, mid, and low. High whorls reside along the upper third of the shaft, mid whorls live in the middle third, which leaves low whorls on the bottom third of the shaft. Whorl position used to be cultural or regional, but we have access to so many spindles that we can pick the whorl position that suits our spinning ability and style.

A high-whorl spindle is good for thigh spinners because the whorl and cop are at the top of the shaft, leaving the lower end of the shaft for your thigh and hand. Sometimes, you'll find a high-whorl spindle that wobbles before you've built up the cop. If this bothers you or is a continual problem, try a mid-whorl spindle. Mid-whorl spindles are incredibly stable even when they're empty. Low-whorl spindles are also very stable, even when empty.

If you want to make	I recommend
⑤ a plied yarn	a slightly heavier spindle that is rim weighted for a fast spin but won't spin forever, giving you frequent breaks to manage your singles. The long shaft means you can ply big skeins.
⑥ any yarn (if you are a new spinner)	a high-whorl midweight drop spindle or a low-whorl Peruvian spindle. Both of these spindles have enough weight that new spinners can tell the spindle is still attached to their fiber, but not so much weight that it feels as if the spindle will drop to the ground at any second. The low-whorl spindle will be incredibly stable no matter how awkwardly it's flicked, and the high-whorl spindle shown here, which was created for teaching, is a nicely balanced spindle with a slight rim and a thicker shaft that makes for a long, somewhat slower spin.

You might experience some wobble with a low-whorl spindle, but the wobble doesn't interfere with the spinning because the whorl has such a low center of gravity: the wobble is at the bottom of the shaft, out of the way of the drafting zone.

Some spindles, such as Russian or silk spindles, don't have an actual whorl. Instead, these spindles have a thickened section of shaft that acts like a whorl.

Shaft

The shaft is basically a stick. It might be long or short and fat or thin. The ends of the shaft can be blunt or pointed. The length of the shaft may be the same diameter from end to end, or there might be a gradual increase in diameter from tip to whorl, then a decrease in diameter from whorl to the end. The diameter of the shaft should fit your fingers: the distance between your thumb and finger when you flick the spindle should feel natural. I've found that if the distance is too large or too small, my hand gets tired sooner. The shaft needs to be thick enough and long enough to contain the whorl, the hook, and a full cop, and still be comfortable for you to use.

Some spindle makers turn the shaft for decorative purposes, but if you ever plan to remove the cop, either avoid turned shafts or be very, very certain your cop won't get tangled in the turnings.

If you roll the spindle along your thigh to get it spinning, you want a longer shaft so there's room for both your hand and thigh and the cop. If you flick the spindle, you can get away with a shorter shaft. In either case, if you're spinning a lot of yardage, look for a longer shaft to hold a bigger cop.

If you're picking a supported spindle, choose one with sharply pointed ends and a shaft that gradually increases in diameter from the top of the shaft to the whorl. This variable diameter can boost your speed: if you flick the spindle near the tip, where the diameter is smaller, the flick will rotate the spindle faster than the same flick at a thicker point on the shaft. The faster rotation will result in a shorter spin time, while the slower rotation will give you a longer spin time. Blunted ends mean you'll get less speed from the spindle. If you want less speed, blunt the lower end a bit; conversely, if you want more speed, sharpen that bottom end a bit. In most cases, when you're using a supported spindle, you want the speed!

Hook

The hook, in all its forms, is the point where the fiber and spindle first meet. The hook also acts as a guide, directing the twist into your fiber. Hooks take many shapes and forms, and as long as the hook doesn't interfere with the rotational stability of the spindle or the winding on of the singles, the style you choose is really personal preference. Remember, the "hook" might be a notch or a spiral carved into the shaft, or it might be replaced by a half hitch if you're using a hookless low-whorl spindle.

Weight

The weight of a spindle is a little tricky because it's subjective. You need to experiment with different-weight spindles and determine what weight or weights you prefer. I've found that I prefer a narrow range of weights, generally on the lighter end, for the yarns I like to spin. You might prefer a broader range than I do. The most important thing about the weight is that the spindle you've picked doesn't feel too light or too heavy for your project. (See? I told you weight is subjective!)

REAL-LIFE SPINDLE PICKS

On previous pages I've shared some of the spindles I recommend for particular jobs.

Disclaimers: I'm a flicker, which means I'm comfortable using shorter shafts because I only need to leave enough of the shaft empty for a few fingers, not my thigh. I also lean toward high-whorl spindles because that's the style I used when I first learned to spin.

Connie Kephart has been spinning since 2003. She is slightly obsessed with spindles. And fifty-fifty yak/silk top.

Resources

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Gripping Yarn, www.grippingyarn.com

Journey Wheel, www.journeywheel.com

Magpie WoodWorks LLC, www.magpiewoodworksusa.com

SpindleWood Co., www.spindlewoodco.com

True Creations, www.tcspindles.com

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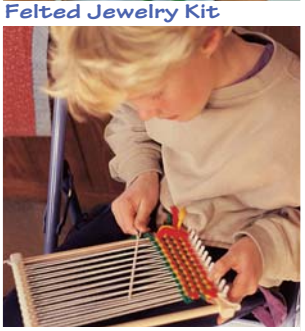
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Photos by Rebecca Mezoff

WOVEN ART

Weaving Tapestry with Handspun Yarn

by Rebecca Mezoff

Building seems like a strange metaphor for tapestry, an art form that is soft and flexible. But tapestry is built a little like a brick wall, from bottom to top. The materials and techniques you use to get to the final piece are important building blocks in a structure that may not hold together well or last very long without the proper techniques and materials.

Sett, warp size, and weft size all interact and influence the images that can be created as well as the hand of the final fabric. Tapestry is a type of weaving, but it is also an art form. Most often, the goal of tapestry weaving is to create some sort of expressive image.

Many of the considerations so important when spinning for a garment, whether it is knitted, crocheted, or woven, are different when spinning yarn for tapestry. When spinning for a sweater, I want an evenly spun and plied yarn that perhaps, depending on the project, gives me good stitch definition as well as a hard-wearing yet soft yarn.

Tapestry yarn is different. Because I am creating an image with it, I am more concerned with the way the yarn reflects light and the structural properties than whether it is soft and airy. In fact, some of the properties that make an excellent knitting yarn are the exact opposite of what you'd want in a tapestry yarn.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TAPESTRY YARN?

There are two primary things I consider when spinning for tapestry: What kind of reflectance do I want in the finished yarn? And what yarn properties will best allow me to create the image I desire?

Let's start with reflectance. To a spinner, this quality is probably best expressed by the word luster. Lustrous yarns reflect a lot of light, which makes them shiny and allows the colors to glow. In a textile where the fibers are all packed closely together, a yarn with high reflectance can create some stunning effects. There are very few commercial tapestry yarns with this lustrous quality, so being able to create yarn from a luster longwool is one advantage of spinning your own tapestry yarn.

Of course, there are images for which your intent may not be to create this high luster or glow. In that case, as a handspinner, you can choose a fleece that is not lustrous. For example, if your image is a field of bright flowers on a deeply colored background, perhaps you'd make the yarn for the flowers out of a high-luster longwool such as Lincoln but the background, which you may not want to be so prominent in your image, out of a wool that has a lower degree of reflectance such as Merino.

The second consideration for a tapestry yarn has to do with structure. How a yarn acts in a textile is important depending on the function of the fabric. When I'm spinning yarn for a sweater, I'm often making a plied yarn that is spun woolen so that it is airy and light.

With tapestry weaving, the resulting textile is most often not functional. My tapestries are art pieces that are created for display. What matters most is that I am able to manipulate the yarn effectively when weaving and that the finished image effectively conveys my intended meaning.

When weaving tapestry, we are putting many small bits of colored yarn together to form a picture. If those yarns are all different diameters, making them behave in the same way to create a textile that is flat and that expresses an image becomes difficult. So size matters. A yarn that is a consistent diameter is certainly easier to weave with. Some variation is acceptable, and thinner bits can be compensated for with extra passes in the weaving, but yarns of similar thickness are best.

Another way that size matters is in the relationship between warp sett, warp size, and weft size. Sett is a term for how many warp ends are in an inch (or centimeter) of weaving width. A sett of 8 ends per inch (epi) means there are 8 warp ends for every inch. A sett of 12 epi means there are more warps in every inch, and the resulting image can be more detailed because there are more options for where to place each weft.



Luster longwool such as Lincoln creates a strong and reflective yarn.



The size of the yarn to be used as weft is about the same as the space between the warp threads.

The trick comes when we throw weft size into that mix. A very thick weft cannot be woven on a sett of 12 epi. There isn't enough room for the weft to go over



Frito's gray locks measure 8 inches, Periwinkle's a crimpier 6 inches.



Dyeing fleece and blending the colors on combs creates a range of colors with more depth than a solid-colored dyed yarn.

and under each of the warps. You could use a fatter weft with a sett of 8 epi than you could with a sett of 12 epi. A general rule of thumb is that if you hold the weft you want to use for a weaving in the direction of the warp, the size of the yarn should be close to the space between the warps. This is just a general rule, and I tend to use a slightly thinner warp than many tapestry weavers, which means that my spaces are not quite filled.

When spinning yarn for tapestry, knowing what sett you want to weave at is helpful. If you intend to weave with just one strand at a time, your weft can be fatter for the same sett. If you want to use multiple singles held together to allow more color blending, then your singles need to be thinner. The final size is determined by the sett.

WHAT KIND OF FLEECE IS BEST FOR TAPESTRY?

Many kinds of fleece can be used successfully for tapestry weaving. Consider the lustrous nature of the fleece (and whether you want luster or not), the staple length, and how to prepare the fiber. The fleece I used in this project came from two sheep from a flock specially bred to produce excellent spinning fleeces. The fleece that was dyed came from Periwinkle, a Cotswold/Lincoln/Wensleydale/California Variegated Mutant (CVM) mix. The staple length was 6 inches. The undyed gray came from Frito, a Lincoln/CVM mix with a staple length of 8 inches. Both of these fleeces had very high luster and medium crimp and were exceptionally clean and well shorn.

I chose these fleeces because of their high luster, their clean, uncotted locks, and the excellent shearing with few second cuts and little vegetable matter. I knew I wanted to use a worsted preparation and would be happiest if I could comb the fleece quickly.

Color

One of the best things about spinning your own tapestry yarn is the ability to manipulate color. If you are also a dyer, your options increase exponentially. For this project, I dyed Periwinkle's fleece in nine gradually changing colors. When combing the fleece, I mixed an intermediate color between each for seventeen colors total. Frito's fleece was used in its natural silver color.



Singles yarns allow several strands to be used together in a weft bundle.

I use Sabraset acid dyes for all of my tapestry yarn. These dyes are extremely lightfast, a very important quality for a textile that will be displayed on a wall. I dyed in the fleece because this gave me the added advantage of mixing the colors with the combs before spinning, thus cutting down the number of colors I needed to dye and giving the finished yarns a more varied appearance. Evenly dyed commercial yarns can create blocks of flat color when woven solidly in tapestry, so the slight variations that come with hand-dyeing add interest to a piece. These colors were created with just four dyes: magenta, yellow, violet, and black. The natural silver color created all the gray areas in the tapestry.

Woolen or worsted?

For tapestry yarn, the answer is often worsted. Certainly you can weave tapestry with yarn made from roving and spun long draw; I have done it and it works fine. But the ultimate tapestry yarn is one that is firmly spun and shows off the reflectance of the fiber. The best way to accomplish that, especially with luster longwools, is with a worsted preparation.

The long staple of the longwools makes combing a great choice. I used my Viking combs, and I needed only two passes to comb the locks because these fleeces were so clean and still in lock formation. I combed them, keeping the tips and cut ends in order, and pulled the top off with a diz. I like to spin from the cut end as the long strands flow so well onto the wheel, so I made sure to make my nests with the cut end out.

Singles or plied?

You can certainly use a plied yarn for tapestry weaving, and most commercial tapestry yarns are two-ply yarns. Some are thick enough to use one strand at a time, while others are very thin, and you would combine multiple strands in a weft bundle to weave with. In my work, I use multiple singles in a weft bundle because this increases the color effects I can create in the weaving. For this project, I spun singles of between 1,650 and 2,200 yards per pound with the intention of using it alone at 12 ends per inch.

WEAVING

Tapestry can be woven on many different kinds of looms. The important thing is that the warp is held under tight and even tension. If you are weaving with a small frame-type loom without a tensioning device, using a warp that is either cotton or wool and thus has a slight amount of stretch is your best choice. For this project, I chose a 20/6 cotton seine twine.

I weave my large tapestries on a countermarch floor loom. It is unlikely that I will be able to handspin all my weft for my very large pieces on this loom any time soon. For handspun projects, I like to use a very simple little loom. This tapestry was woven on a 9-by-10-inch, 6-dent loom warped double for 12 ends per inch.

If your handspun has enough twist and is made from fiber with a long enough staple to survive some abrasion, you can weave on small looms with just a needle. If your yarn is more fragile, a tapestry bobbin can be helpful to hold the yarn and protect it some as you pull it through the warp.

The structure of tapestry is a simple over, under, over, under pattern. It is an unbalanced plain weave. The warp is sett wide enough apart that the weft slides down to completely cover the warp. Starting from the bottom of your image, you'll take a journey up the warp, creating your own images with yarn.



With just a few simple tools—a frame loom, bobbins, and a shed stick—you can transform handspun yarn into your own magic carpet.

Here are a few important concepts as you try your first tapestry with your handspun yarn:

- The amount of weft you put into each trip across the warp is important. The yarn has to go over and under each warp thread, so you need more weft than would be created if you just made a straight line. Make little bubbles with the weft, which will introduce enough yarn to go over and under each warp. If you see the warp after you pack the weft down, you are not bubbling enough.
- Start at the bottom and work to the top. Tapestry is never woven by starting in the middle of your warp. Structurally, it has to start at the bottom and move up the warp, each pick being held by the one just before it.
- If your warp is showing after you beat the weft in, you haven't hit the sweet spot between warp sett and weft size or you aren't bubbling enough.
- There are two sheds or warp openings in tapestry. On a simple loom, one can be held open by a thin stick or double-pointed knitting needle as you see on page 58. The other shed is "picked" by using a shed stick or needle. If your yarn is fragile or you want to avoid any fuzz created by the abrasion of drawing it through a closed warp, use a shed stick to hold the shed open while putting the weft through.
- The warp should be tight and even. As you are warping a simple loom without tensioning, stretch the warp a little as you apply it. Otherwise your warp may be very floppy, which makes weaving more challenging.

TAPESTRY MAGIC

Sometimes, I imagine my job is to weave magic carpets. I no longer regard the fuzzy bathmat in my childhood bathroom as my flying carpet inspiration, though. I don't need to. The magic of creating yarn straight from the sheep in marvelous, shiny colors is all the magic I need. A spinner knows that taking the time to make something by hand is worthwhile. Tapestry takes time. Making exactly the yarn you want to express your image is worth the effort. Besides, you can't buy just any old yarn for your particular magic carpet.



If you'd like to weave tapestries, give it a try! Find or make a simple loom, spin yourself some weft and maybe even some warp, and start making those little scenes in the back of your head a reality in yarn.

Rebecca Mezoff has been weaving magic carpets for well over a decade now. She lives somewhere in the American Southwest where she frequently has to dump the sand out of her shoes. She teaches tapestry weaving online at www.rebeccamezoff.com. She also offers free information on how to weave tapestries on her blog at www.rebeccamezoff.com/blog.

Resources

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Photo by George Boe

MAKE YOUR DRUMCARDER YOUR FRIEND FOR LIFE

by Deb Menz

So you just acquired your first drumcarder . . . What next?

I remember when I got my first drumcarder. I hate to say how many decades ago that was, but it was close to our country's bicentennial. My first drumcarder came with some instructions, but not many. Then, it was assumed that if you could spin or handcard, drumcarding skills would automatically follow. At that time, there were no books that talked about drumcarders, so I ventured out on my own and learned by trial and error.

A drumcarder is not a complicated piece of equipment, but let's be clear about what it can and is meant to do. The purpose of a drumcarder is to open up and generally align fibers to make spinning easier and more controllable. It can also be a great tool for color and fiber blending.

A drumcarder is not meant to remove second cuts or vegetable matter. A drumcarder cannot magically make a poor-quality fleece into something wonderful.

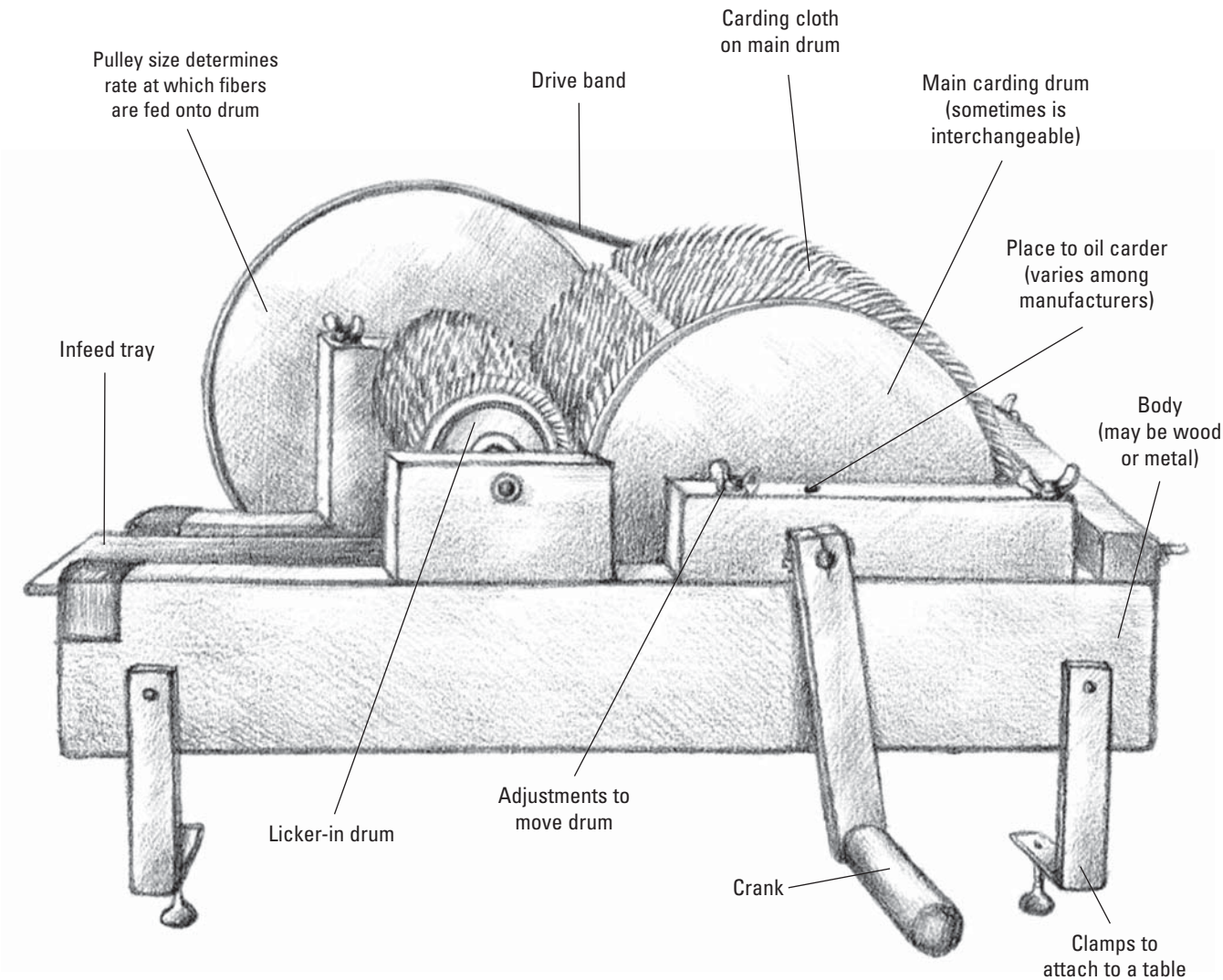
If the carder isn't brand new, just new to you, there are a few things to look out for. Make sure that the drums crank easily, the carding cloth is intact, and the teeth are straight (or where they should be). You may find information online about how to make necessary adjustments or maintain the carder.

MEET YOUR NEW TOOL

Once your drumcarder is out of the box, you need to set it up and adjust it. There are not usually many things to assemble, but follow the enclosed instructions. Make sure that the crank that is attached to the large drum is on securely and is properly locked in.

Adjustments to the spacing of the drums might take a little more effort. Each carder has its own system for adjustments, so make sure to understand how to make the drums parallel and at the correct distance from one another. Some carders are designed for the teeth to intermesh while carding; as you crank the drum, you will hear a "crunching" sound when you turn the handle. If your carder is not designed to intermesh, make sure the drums are parallel but not too far apart. If teeth do mesh when not intended to, the carding teeth can get rough, and fibers will catch on the rough teeth instead of getting carded. It can be very frustrating and create a lot of wasted fibers. The directions that come with your carder will tell you what is appropriate.

There should be some information on how to adjust your carder. There is a sweet spot for spacing between the drums: If they are too far apart, fibers will just flop from the licker-in drum to the large drum without any carding taking place. That is fine if you are creating an "art" batt and only want to place fibers in the batt, but for fiber carding and color blending, you want the drums about an index card's thickness apart. Check the spacing by inserting an index card between the drums. To confirm that the drums are parallel, look down from above. If you have trouble seeing the space, place black or white paper under the carder.



Get to know the parts of your drumcarder. Illustration by Susan Strawn

HOW TO KEEP YOUR CARDER LIKE NEW

Does the carder need a break-in period? I don't believe so. There are very few moving parts, and none of them should change with use. The moving parts are the two drums, the small (licker-in) drum and the large drum where the batt is formed. The teeth on both carding drums should not change over time, so I see no need to treat the carder differently when new.

With loving care, you can make this drumcarder stay "new" by taking good care and maintaining it regularly. What is good maintenance? There are only a few points to keep in mind.

- Do not use greasy fleece on your carder unless that is all you plan to card on it. Once grease is deposited on the teeth, it is difficult to remove. The grease on the teeth attracts dirt, which gets deposited on each batt carded.
- The rate at which fibers are fed into the carder affects both the quality of the batt and the integrity of the carding cloth. When too many fibers are fed on at a time, it becomes very hard to crank the drum (or, if it is motorized, the motor heats up). Even if the drum can be turned, no effective carding takes place. The fiber is "gulped" onto the large drum without sufficient carding, and it wreaks havoc on the integrity of the carding teeth, bending them. It is more efficient to feed small amounts at a time. You will ultimately get the same amount of fiber in the batt, but the quality of the batt improves and it needs fewer passes through the carder. As a rule of thumb, you should be able to see the infeed tray through the layer of fiber (Figure 2, opposite). If it becomes difficult to crank, take off some fiber, feed in less fiber at a time, and crank a little slower.
- When placing fibers in the infeed tray, avoid pressing down on them or holding them back. They will only wrap around the licker-in and will not be carded.
- Bent teeth can cause fibers to catch when you are removing a batt, and they can also cause irregular thick and thin spots. Teeth can be bent by using a knitting needle, large crochet hook, or large doffer stick to pick out fibers left on the drum. Using something like tweezers, a fetling brush, or fine dog brush to remove those fibers will keep your carding cloth in brand-new condition.
- If you find bent teeth, there is a way to repair them and return them to their original position in the carding cloth. Take the lead out of a mechanical pencil. Place the leadless pencil onto the first portion of the bent tooth and bend the tooth back to the original angle and position in the carding cloth (Figure 3, opposite). It takes time and patience to do this, but it is certainly cheaper than buying new carding cloth.
- Do not feed nonteased fibers into the drumcarder (Figure 4, opposite). Teasing fibers is very important to the health of the carding teeth. When fibers that have been too compacted are fed onto the drumcarder, the carding teeth are stressed. If the teeth are stressed often, they can loosen in the carding cloth, at which point the carding cloth needs to be replaced. If treated well, carding cloth will last a lifetime.
- It is a good thing to regularly check for stray fibers that have gotten caught over the sides of the drum. Those fibers can end up getting wrapped around the shafts of the drums. Eventually, the fibers accumulate and affect the ease of cranking. I had a student who was experiencing difficulty turning the handle; when we took the carder apart, we found almost an ounce of fiber wrapped around the shafts of both drums. Cranking was easy when the carder was oiled and reassembled. If you only have a few fibers trapped, use tweezers to pull them out. If you suspect that there are a lot of fibers trapped, you might consider taking your carder apart to remove the fibers. While you are at it, you can oil the shaft before reassembly.
- If you have a motorized carder, read any directions for maintaining the motor. Usually there is little, if anything, for you to do. Make sure not to overload the motor's capabilities by feeding too much fiber on at a time or by manually slowing the drums down.



1



2



3

1. Useful tools for drumcarder maintenance, from left: ordinary dog brush, fetling brush (to clean carding cloth), burnishing tool (to pack fibers onto the drum), doffer stick (to pull batt apart to remove from drum), tweezers (to pick fibers out of carding cloth and from the sides of the drums). 2. This is the appropriate amount of fiber to feed onto the drum at a time. 3. To repair a bent tooth, place a mechanical pencil over a bent carding tooth to bend it back into its original position. 4. The fiber on the right is a clean fleece that has not been teased. The fiber on the left shows adequately teased fiber ready to card.



4

Photos by George Zens

BURNISHING BRUSH?

A burnishing brush, either handheld or attached to the carder, pushes fibers into the teeth of the large drum. It is a popular accessory, but there are pros and cons to its use. Some spinners claim that with the tool they can fit more fibers on the drum for each batt. If you are striving for the maximum weight in each batt, that is good, but I am not sure why bigger batts are considered better. To include more fiber in a batt, the fiber must be more compressed. For felting, denser batts make it easier to felt, but for spinners, a denser batt can be more difficult to draft and therefore to spin. (The attachment is useful when you are trying to get another layer of color onto the batt for a certain effect.)

TIPS FOR HAPPY CARDING

How Big Is Your Batt?

What is the perfect size for a batt? That depends on the drumcarder but also on the fiber. Fatter batts are possible when the teeth on the large drum are longer. The longer the teeth, the more fibers can comfortably fit into a single batt. However, just because the teeth are long, it doesn't mean that the fattest batt is the most appropriate for the fiber being carded. One weight of batt is not necessarily perfect for every fiber that is carded. Think in proportion: fine fibers, thin batt, fine yarn; coarse fibers, thicker batt, thicker yarn. For any size batt, it is easier to spin a consistent yarn when the batts you have carded are similar in weight and amount of carding.

How Many Passes Do You Make?

How much carding is enough? How much is too much? Generally speaking, one time through a



A batt that has been carded once.



Tear the batt into four pieces to card again.



Feed one of the carded portions of fiber onto the drum a second time.

Photos by George Zens

drumcarder is not enough. The first pass takes the fibers from teased fibers to generally aligned but not even. For the second pass, tear the batt in half lengthwise and again in half widthwise to make four pieces. Open up each piece and feed it into the carder. The new batt will be smoother and more even than after the first pass. You decide if you want to card it further or not. You can't hurt the fibers, but there is a point of diminishing returns. The spacing on the teeth of the carding cloth creates limits; the denser the spacing of the teeth, the more finely the fibers can be carded. If your carding cloth has more teeth per inch, you can card the fiber more times and get better results each time. (It doesn't mean that you have to card the fibers more on densely spaced carding cloth, but it means that you can card more if you want to and still get somewhat better results.) With coarser cloth, there is no benefit to carding many times.

When carding for color blending, the more passes through the carder, the more the colors blend. You begin to see the batt as a new, duller color, not a blend of several colors. Those choices are subjective and depend on what you want.

The weight of the batt also helps determine how many times the fiber needs to be carded to create the kind of batt you want. The heavier or thicker the batt, the more passes the batt needs through the carder to be carded thoroughly. If you have a pound of fiber to card, it will take less time to card sixteen 1-ounce batts than to card it in four 4-ounce batts that are carded to the same degree. (Try it both ways and really look at the results.)

STORING YOUR DRUMCARDER

Store your carder in a dry place out of the sun. Dampness can cause rust of the teeth and drum shafts, and constant sunlight can shorten the life of the carding cloth. Place the carder in a box or safe place to avoid anything falling on it and damaging the carding cloth.

There are many nuances in the art of drumcarding fibers. As much time can be spent in the carding portion of a project as in the spinning portion of the project. Your drumcarder can be your best friend and partner in your craft if you take the time to understand it and practice to get the batts you want.

What has been said here about drumcarding does not necessarily pertain to art batts. They are a whole different kind of batt with a different set of parameters.

Troubleshooting Problems with Your Drumcarder

If your carder is "gulping" fibers:

- you are feeding on too many fibers at a time, or
- the fibers are not teased enough, or
- you are turning the crank too fast—slow down!

If the crank is hard to turn:

- fibers may be stuck on the sides of the large and small drums or wrapped around the drum shafts, or
- you are trying to feed too many fibers at a time.

If the fiber is not being carded at all or inadequately:

- check the spacing between the drums; there might be too much space between them, or
- the fibers are not teased enough and the licker-in just lets go of the fiber without carding, or
- you might need to put the batt through the carder again to finish the carding process; thorough carding does not take place in one pass.

Deb Menz has made fibers and textiles for the last forty years. Deb has authored two books, *Color in Spinning* and *Color Works,* and has created several videos, all from Interweave. She shows her mixed-media work around the country. Deb lives with her partner and patron, Buzz.

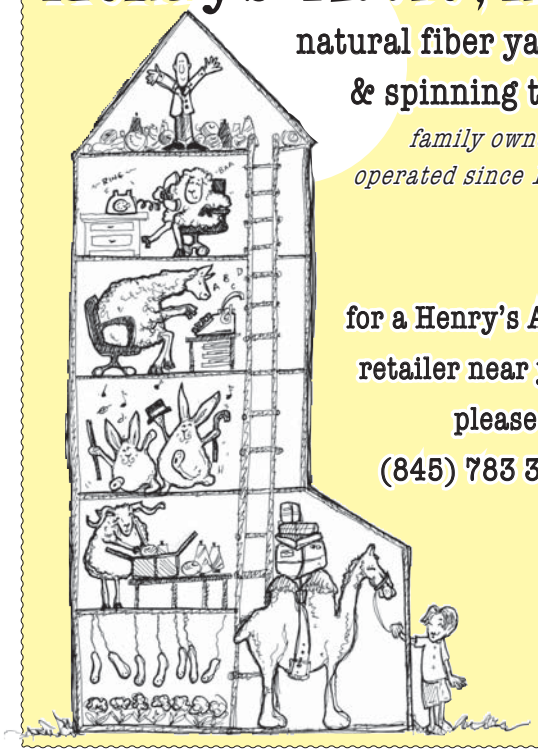
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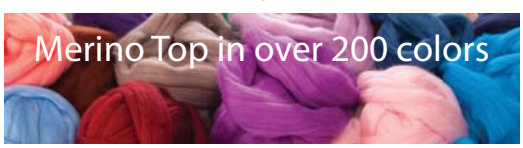
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DECISIONS, DECISIONS
(Who needs 'em?)

by Leslie Ann Hauer

Decisions are overrated.

Every day, every hour, every minute, we are confronted with the requirement that we make decisions, life-changing to mundane, serious to farcical, important, and well, not so much. Black shoes or brown? Mocha or latte? Deal first with the spilled milk on the kitchen floor or the dog licking it up or the children tracking it into the carpet? According to Jim Sollisch in "The Cure for Decision Fatigue" (*Wall Street Journal,* June 10, 2016), the average American makes thirty-five thousand decisions a day. Studies of willpower suggest that each person has a limited ability to competently make decisions in any given day. This means that at some point, a massive number of those thirty-five thousand decisions aren't decisions at all, but capitulation to sheer weariness!

So when you have the time to do something you really want to do, why burden it with unnecessary decisions that turn pleasure into stress and joy into work? This article is not directed at the person who delights in control, but to the person who feels guilty when outcomes are not properly and methodically prearranged. To that person, I say: Relax! Predetermination is most obvious when viewed in a rearview mirror.

CHOOSING A FLEECE

One school of thought suggests that a spinner should start with a project in mind and select a fleece accordingly: consider carefully the staple length and micron count, weigh the characteristics of various breeds, ponder the potential for dyeing or using the natural color.

A few things are obvious: Merino is generally unsuitable for rugs, Churro is unsuitable for underwear, and while this is true, there's more to the process. Beyond all the quantitative aspects, a fleece is a natural product, each unique in its own way.

Another approach to selecting a fleece is to find one to love, paying special attention to color and feel. This also applies to prepared, dyed fiber: love it first, then decide what to do with it. If a fleece or fiber isn't appealing, why bother? If the fleece feels wonderful—if the natural color glows or if the space-dyeing is amazing—it will be a joy to work with.

SPINNING THE YARN

One school of thought suggests that it's important to determine the purpose of the yarn, especially before choosing a fleece but certainly before spinning. Twists per inch must be carefully counted, treadling monitored,

Why decisions are bad for your health

Here are four good reasons to avoid decisions.

1. Decisions cause stress. Requiring that every decision happen in advance is too much like work. (Some decisions are important, of course. Such as getting started rather than dithering about whether to get started.)
2. Decisions made before beginning a project limit the possibilities for artistic expression and foreclose serendipity, the happy accident when everything just comes together and works.
3. Decisions shouldn't be made hastily. Procrastination can be your friend but should not be confused with "dithering" (see #1). Sometimes, elements of a project need to "percolate"; one friend spreads all the potential yarns for her next weaving project across a table that she has to pass several times a day, until the most pleasing combination speaks to her. Creative procrastination especially applies to dusting and vacuuming but also works for yarn-making, especially if it's the dusting and vacuuming that are procrastinated.
4. Decisions are the antithesis of going with the flow and allowing a project to develop intuitively. This may not always be obvious at the beginning. For a control-oriented person, this can be difficult but gets easier with practice.

perhaps even tracking the precision with a little song to help maintain rhythm.

To me, this sounds like another day at the office where someone else is in charge.

Another approach to yarn-making is to simply start spinning. Try spinning a washed but otherwise unprepared fleece. Open the tips of locks a bit or spin from the fold. Suppose you fell in love with the adorable curlicues on a lamb fleece. What a shame if you then eliminate that delightful element because you predetermined that it's necessary to comb or card! Try something different to preserve the delight so that what you loved will not be lost in overprocessing. Be ready to trust your judgment and your intuition. If the resulting yarn looks right, it probably is. This is not rocket science and doesn't need the precise calculation of orbital mechanics or even the timing for a microwave dinner.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE YARN?

One school of thought already knows. Ho hum.

The rest of us collect lovely skeins, and some even consider yarn to be the finished object, perhaps part of home decor. Inspiration—and inspired rather than forced decision-making!—is no less important for the use of yarn than its creation.

Personally, I love to spin and I love to use my yarn, but I hate a rigid, predetermined approach that is too much like work. My method leads to designing projects that do not require a gauge or sample to begin, such as the Pi Hat (*Spin Off*, Spring 2013) or A Pair of Jacob Hats (*Spin Off*, Winter 2015). Yes, there will be decisions, but decisions made as a project evolves. The result is less stress, fewer excuses not to start, and more opportunity to work with the yarn, accepting its quirks and unique qualities.

WINDING PATH hat

Here is another simple hat that will work for any yarn, any gauge, any size.

Materials

Fiber 2–3 oz wool.
Yarn Any yarn is suitable for this pattern.
Needles Choose a size to give a good gauge for your yarn.
Gauge As needed to make a nice fabric for a hat.
Notions Markers (m); tapestry needle.
Finished Size 20–21" circumference and 7" or more tall.
See the knitting glossary at interweave.com for terms you don't know.

Notes

This is not so much a pattern as a sketch to be adjusted for size (e.g., width can be less than 4½" and length less than 20–21" for a smaller hat). Since the instructions are based on measurements rather than stitch counts, any yarn weight and gauge can be used.

It is helpful to mark the right side of the knitting.

The hat shown here is worked with 2-ply yarns, about DK weight (1,100 ypp, 13 wpi), worked on size 6 (4 mm) needles. There were 25 stitches at 5" wide; 108 stitches were picked up around the top for the crown. The same number was picked up for the lower edge, and several rounds of knit 1, purl 1 rib were worked. Crown decreases were worked in four sections, with 2 stitches decreased in each section (total of 8 stitches decreased each decrease round).

Possible Variations

- Use multiple colors, changing yarn as desired.
- Add a cable pattern along the increase edge.
- Add length to the body of the hat before shaping the crown to make a slouch-style hat.
- Change to stockinette and decrease for the crown less frequently to make a more conical shape or more frequently to make a flatter shape.











Hat

CO 2 sts.

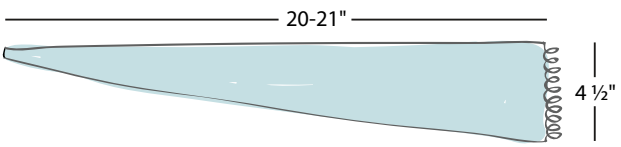
Increase section:

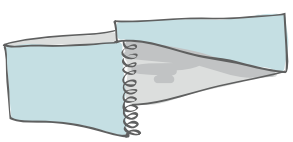
Row 1 Knit.

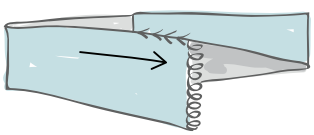
Row 2 (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, RLI, knit to end—1 st inc'd.

Row 3 Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to end.

Rep Row 3 every row, working a Row 2 on a RS row every inch until triangle measures about 20–21" long or 4½" wide (whichever comes first), ending with a WS row. If width is reached before length, rep Row 3 until length is reached, ending with a WS row.







Join into a spiral:

If width is 4½":

Row 4 (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to last st, sl 1 kwise, pick up and knit 1 st in first garter ridge, psso.

Row 5 Sl 1 pwise with yarn in front, knit to end.

Rep last 2 rows, joining to subsequent garter ridges along right edge of inc section, and working a dec corresponding to each inc row from inc section as foll:

Dec row (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to last 3 sts, k2tog, sl 1 kwise, pick up and knit 1 st in next garter ridge, psso—1 st dec'd.

Cont in patt until 3 sts rem—body of hat is formed with a consistent width of approximately 4½".

If width is less than 4½":

Cont inc every inch and *at the same time* joining work into a spiral. When piece is 4½" wide, beg dec as described above.

Crown:

This is a decision point: either show the neat line of joining sts or turn the work WS out so the joining sts are on the inside. Then, beg with the 3 sts on needle, pick up and knit 1 st in each garter ridge around top of hat. Place marker (pm) and join in the rnd (or not . . . it's perfectly fine to work back and forth and seam the crown).

Easy, no decision method: Divide sts into 4 sections (quarters) with m, dec if necessary on first rnd so st count is evenly divisible by 4. **Dec rnd** [Ssk, knit to 2 sts before m, k2tog] 4 times—8 sts dec'd. Purl 1 rnd. Rep last 2 rnds until 8 sts rem. **Next rnd** [Ssk] 4 times—4 sts rem.

Top option 1:

Break yarn, thread tail through rem sts, and fasten off.

Top option 2:

Work an I-cord "top knot" on 3 or 4 sts, working for 2" or 3" to allow for the knot. Break yarn, thread tail through rem sts, and fasten off.

Lower edge:

For other crown shaping options, see Possible Variations on page 68.

If you decide to work an edging around lower edge:

Pick up and knit 1 st for each garter ridge around lower edge. If result is an odd number, dec 1 st, or a few more to make a snug fit. Pm and join in the rnd. Work in rib for a few rnds or longer for an edge that can be folded up. BO all sts in patt. Or omit the rib and work an I-cord BO around edge to make a neat finish.

Finishing

If necessary, sew crown seam. Weave in ends. Block.

Leslie Ann Hauer lives in West Richland, Washington, where she spins, knits, weaves, tends two dogs and a husband, and does plein air oil painting.



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Photos by Felicia Lo

SPINNING COLOR

Excerpt from *Dyeing to Spin & Knit*

by Felicia Lo

Hand-dyed spinning fibers have an irresistible allure. The combination of vibrant or subtle colors blending into each other on a canvas of clean, combed top appeals to the imagination and begs to be spun. For many, however, the sheer beauty of an unspun handpainted top causes creative paralysis. Spinners fear that spinning the colors in the fiber will ruin the original colorway. There is a fear that the colors will all mix together and look muddy or that the colors, once so attractive, will actually end up too bright, gaudy, or even clownish in the final yarn. With spinning, all these color issues are under your control. You can make your handspun produce stripes, blotches, and spots; you can make heathered yarn or create very gentle, smooth transitions from color to color.

• • •

Dyeing to Spin & Knit: Techniques & Tips to Make Custom Hand-Dyed Yarns. Blue Ash, Ohio: Interweave, 2016.
www.interweave.com

HOW STRIPPING AFFECTS COLOR

Vertically stripping your spinning top into finer and finer segments will reduce the amount of fiber there is of each color. Thus, when you spin it into a single strand of yarn, the length of yarn spun of that color will be shorter. Overall, the thinner the strips of fiber, the more subdued, mixed, and blended your final yarn will potentially be. As well, more stripping will produce more frequent color changes in your yarn.



Right: Fiber being split.

Below, top row: Fiber divided into two equal sections, one section of which was split six more times (left). Each half spun and plied, though it's difficult to see the effect of stripping in the skein (right). Bottom row: Knitted swatches to show the difference between stripping multiple times (left) and no stripping (right).









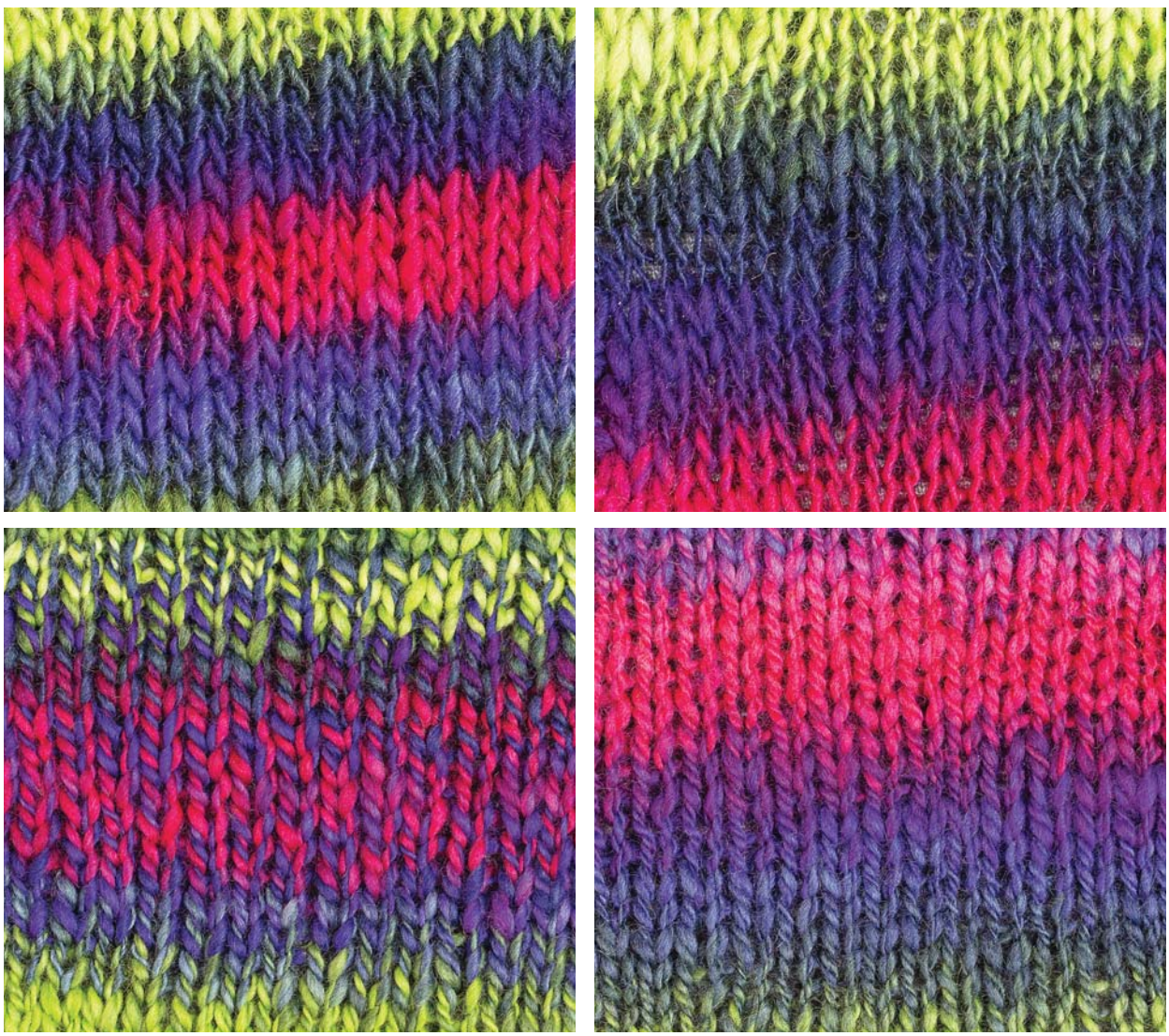
HOW PREDRAFTING AFFECTS COLOR

Surprisingly, predrafting (drawing out fiber without adding twist prior to spinning) has a great effect on the appearance of color. Without predrafting, color changes in your fiber may appear strong and sharp in the yarn. Predrafting effectively creates smooth transitions between different colors and results in a more gradual color change in your finished yarn.

As beginning spinners, many of us learned to split and predraft our fibers prior to spinning. Predrafting allows the fibers to slide out of the fiber supply more easily while spinning. It can reduce the anxiety, when you are just starting out as a spinner, of having to manage your fingers and fiber supply, while also keeping the wheel turning in the correct direction.

Once we become proficient at drafting from the fiber supply and spinning a consistent yarn, we tend to drop that extra step of predrafting the fiber prior to spinning unless it's a highly compacted top or roving that needs to be loosened up. Predrafting always seems to be a fiber management issue and completely unrelated to color effects, but believe it or not, predrafting affects your handspun color presentation more than you think.

Predrafting and attenuating the top or roving slips the fibers out of their position and effectively blends the transition between color sections. As a result, predrafted yarns take on the appearance of having smooth, blended color shifts, while yarns that have not been predrafted retain the sharpness of their color transitions.



Examples of the effect of predrafting. Top row: Singles yarn without predrafting (left) and with predrafting (right). Bottom row: Two-ply yarn without predrafting (left) and with predrafting (right). Yarns spun from predrafted fibers have smoother transitions.



From bottom left to top right: Wensleydale, superwash merino, and merino fiber dyed with the same "Bouquet" colorway. There is a great deal of variation in how the different fibers take up the dye color.

HOW STAPLE LENGTH AFFECTS COLOR

Another factor that affects the appearance of final color in your yarn is the staple length of the fiber relative to the length of the dyed color sections. Colors are sharper, crisper, and cleaner when the length of the dyed color section is longer than the staple length of the fiber.

For example, if we compare merino (with a typical staple length of 3 to 5 inches [7.5 to 12.5 cm)] with Wensleydale (staple length of 8 to 12 inches [20.5 to 30.5 cm)], both dyed with a colorway that has 6-inch (15 cm) color sections, the merino fiber should produce cleaner color changes than the yarn spun from the Wensleydale. At any given point along the fiber, the Wensleydale will have two different colors that cannot be separated cleanly because they are dyed on the same staple of fiber.



Staple lengths of different wool fibers. From left to right: Wensleydale, superwash merino, Polwarth+silk blend dyed in the "Bouquet" colorway. Longer staples in which more than one color has been dyed will produce a more blended and subdued spun yarn because the colors cannot easily be kept distinct.

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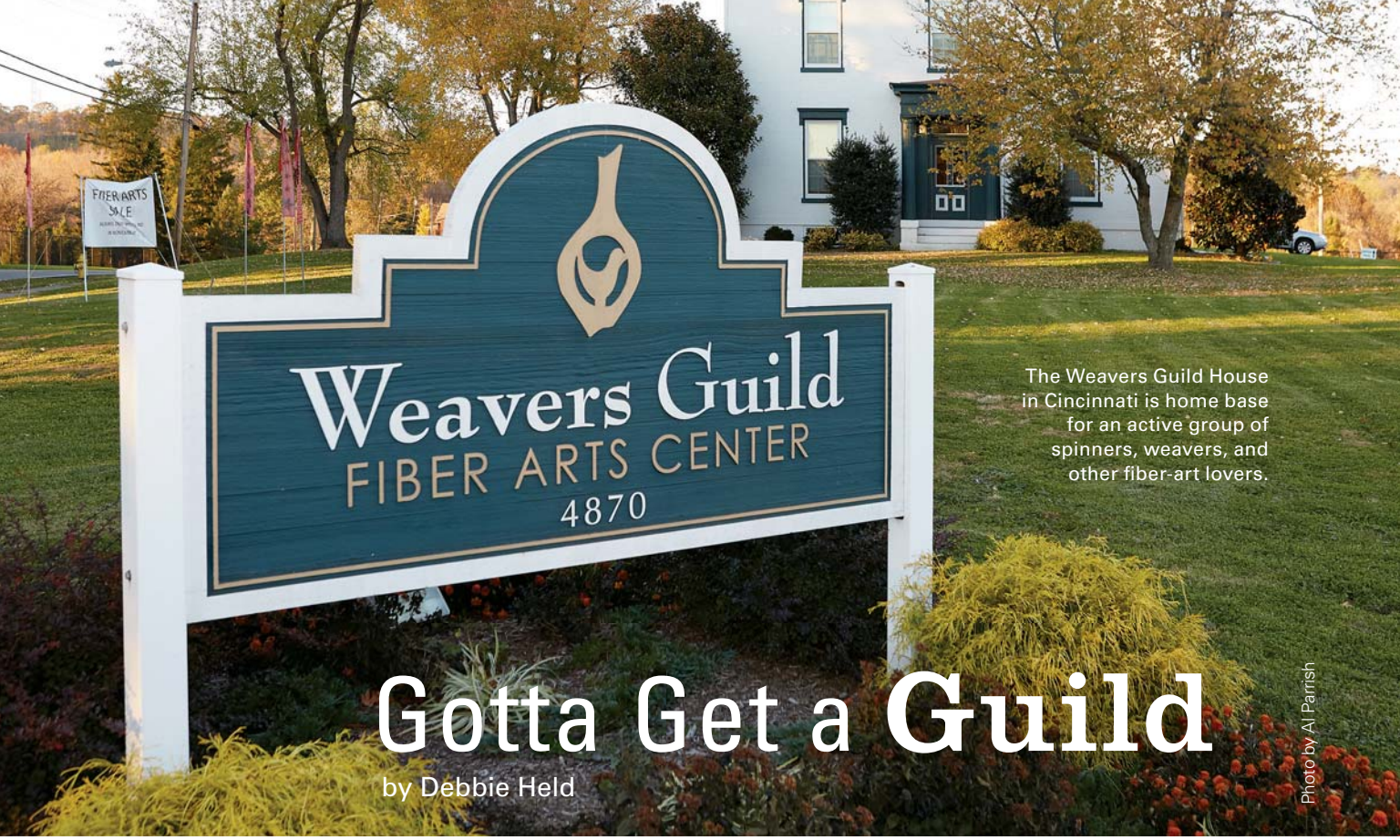
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Photo by Al Parrish

Gotta Get a Guild

by Debbie Held

"You're so lucky; you belong to the greatest spinning guild!"

I often hear this from friends when I tell them about the latest in my world of spinning. Everything from my first teaching gig to a scholarship for a weekend workshop with a noted spinning author: somehow nearly every opportunity stems from my membership in Atlanta's Peachtree Handspinners Guild (PHG).

Sure, we also boast the more obvious guild benefits: a library of books, spinning wheels, and fiber tools available for checkout, scholarship opportunities, spinning retreats, and more perks than I can list. But perhaps best of all, I have found in my guild a home base of fellow spinaholics who consider handspinning to be a lifestyle, one meant to be shared for the sake of the craft's continuation. Through these spinners, I strive to do and know more about my spinning and never to stagnate. Best of all, in this noncompetitive environment, friendship is assumed, if not guaranteed.

"There is no spinning guild near me," is usually what I hear when I encourage a friend who lives elsewhere to find a guild of her own.

So today I say, look harder. Check online for other fiber-related crafting guilds in your area, particularly weaving guilds, as many also have spinning programs. Additionally, a guild that was named for one fiber craft (in some cases fifty years ago) may have expanded its interests over the decades. "We're the Weavers Guild of Greater Cincinnati," says board member and spinning teacher Pat Maley of her guild, which was formed in 1948. "And while our name says 'weavers,' we are primarily spinners. We now consider ourselves a fiber-arts guild."

WHAT IS A GUILD, EXACTLY?

These days, a guild is simply an organized group that meets together over a common interest. According to Suzi Gough, president of the board of directors of the Southeast Fiber Arts Alliance (SEFAA), a hub for fiber groups and enthusiasts of all ilk, "There is no rule stating that you have to become a 501(c)(3) charity, nor that you have to incorporate. You could just meet in someone's living room or at Starbucks every Wednesday."

Such gatherings are a vestige of the medieval guilds in Western Europe, which performed multiple functions, says medieval historian (and *Love of Knitting* editor) Deborah Gerish. Artisans in weaving, spinning, woolcombing, and lacemaking banded together to



Photo courtesy of Peachtree Handspinners Guild

Peachtree Handspinners Guild members enjoying the annual November "social, sale, and spin" meeting, where members are encouraged to bring fiber-related goods to sell during the afternoon of socializing and spinning.



Photo by Al Parrish

Weavers Guild of Greater Cincinnati board member Pat Maley spins during the annual Fiber Arts Sale.

ensure quality control, train new craftspeople, and generally devise professional standards for everyone in the guild. There were strict rules regarding training: masters, who owned and operated their own workshops, shared their expertise with apprentices (the newest members) and journeymen (a middling-level rank). Members also housed, fed, clothed, and otherwise looked out for their workers; the guild, in turn, helped masters' families in case of illness or death. These guilds formed a crucial element of craftspeople's lives through the Industrial Revolution, though by that time, they more closely resembled modern trade unions.

The modern American crafting guild came into fashion around the 1950s. In a nod to European heritage, it was not uncommon for an applicant to be expected to have a certain level of expertise in his or her craft and to be able to prove it.

Today, that kind of pressure is not the norm. The modern spinning guild is much more like a club, says Gough. Learning is still central to its core purpose, via workshops, classes, and even through informal learning during guild meetings: trying out another member's spinning wheel, watching how another spinner drafts, or listening to fellow members share lessons from their workshop travels. "Being a member of a guild pushes you to better your skills in a way you cannot get from YouTube or from reading a book," she says.

HOME BASE

Imagine, if you can, a physical spinning home, one in which you and your fellow fiber pals can felt, dye, and finish in a wet room; hold spinning classes and get-togethers in a spinning or weaving studio (that houses more than a dozen spinning wheels and all types of looms); and have access to a working kitchen, a classroom, an overflow room for meetings, and plenty of basement storage. This is your community's gathering

place for dozens of scheduled workshops led by renowned professionals, more casual study groups, and weekly Fiber Fridays, where you bring your current works-in-progress and a potluck dish and gather just to chat. Members have access to this house whenever it is open two to four days a week. For a small fee, they can even check out equipment (as if they'd ever wish to leave).

This bite of utopia is real. It is the Weavers Guild House in Cincinnati. It was purchased by the Weavers Guild of Greater Cincinnati (WGGC) in 1997, when member growth and the need for a better system for storing equipment led the group to its then-dilapidated doors. WGGC members and volunteers sledgehammered down walls, poured a concrete sidewalk, rebuilt and repainted, and even whitewashed the entire basement during a weekend "Tom Sawyer" party, according to Maley.

Prior to owning the Weavers Guild House, the guild held meetings at various churches throughout town. Study sessions met in members' homes, and what equipment the guild owned was stashed in local shops—neither ideal for growth nor easy to arrange for workshops.

With a roster today of two hundred very active members, many with day jobs and children to tend, guild meetings and other activities are split evenly between daytime and evenings or weekends. Proceeds from the guild's annual art sale help to keep the lights on so that the group may focus on its real priority: teaching proficiency in the fiber crafts through its workshops, classes, forums, and community exhibits.





Top: The annual Weavers Guild of Greater Cincinnati sale features handmade goods of all kinds.

Bottom: From left, reporter Stephanie Stokes, author Debbie Held, and Peachtree Handspinners Guild member Paula Vester conduct an interview for WABE (NPR affiliate) *Atlanta Sounds.*

A GUILD BY ANY NAME (IS STILL A GUILD)

Defining your group's main objective is key to its lasting success, advises Paula Vester, an Atlanta-based spinning historian, demonstrator, and teacher who has been active in PHG since its initial gathering in 1984.

According to Vester, it was decided early on that PHG would focus its mission on educational pursuits related to fiber and handspun. It would also have as informal an organizational structure as possible, allowing the group flexibility in decision making without wading into bureaucracy. "We don't want the structure [of the guild itself] to get in the way of helping people with their love of fiber, knitting, and spinning," Vester says. "The more structurally organized you are, the less flexible the group becomes."

For PHG, what began as a spinners' study group of thirteen grew rapidly and almost immediately. Wherever these women were found demonstrating their

spinning, typically at festivals around the region, curious onlookers often found themselves called to join up and learn the craft. It's a phenomenon that still happens today when guild members demonstrate at the Georgia Renaissance Festival and the Georgia National Fair.

So while PHG is a not-for-profit group, it is not and will likely never become an official 501(c)(3) organization, which has more demanding rules regarding such nuances as the number of officers who must be elected, the notes to be taken at meetings, and how many board members must officially vote before a bylaw can be changed.

Yet PHG has industry-known spinning teachers, judges, and toolmakers among us, and formal and informal educational opportunities abound. Whether we're gathered with our wheels on someone's back porch, banded together as mentors teaching new spinners in our Spinning 101 classes, or spending the weekend engrossed in a workshop, along the way, everyone learns something through this in-person dynamic. "It is this sharing of knowledge that keeps this guild moving forward," Vester explains.

This interaction is our most valuable tool. The same can be said of any spinning guild and its membership.

JUST CALL ME GUILDED

So forget about titles and names. Give a guild a chance, and within it you may find your own handspinning home base, ripe with rewards you have yet to imagine.

Debbie Held, a freelance writer and handspinner, lives her life surrounded by good friends, her Italian greyhound, Iggy, and plenty of wool and spinning tools. She credits spinning with helping to pull her through a decades-long chronic illness. Debbie and her stash live in the Atlanta area and may be found at www.debbieheld.com.

Resources

For a spinning (or spinning-related) guild in your area, see *Spin Off*'s directory at www.interweave.com/spinning-guilds-directory. To have your own guild listed there, email spinoff@interweave.com.

Weavers Guild of Greater Cincinnati: www.weaversguildcincinnati.org

Peachtree Handspinners Guild: www.peachtreehandspinnersguild.org

Stokes, Stephannie, writer. "A Growing Group Of Handspinners Drawn To The Ancient Craft." In *Atlanta Sounds*. March 22, 2015. http://news.wabe.org/post/growing-group-handspinners-drawn-ancient-craft

Thinking of joining a spinning or fiber-themed guild?

Here are just a few benefits you may find. (Inquire about exclusions or limitations; some guilds require months of paid membership before checking out equipment, for example.)

- Access to a physical library of books, patterns, instructional videos, magazines, and more, which you may usually check out
- Equipment rental (sometimes for a marginal additional fee)
- Early access to or discounts for industry speakers, events, workshops, and programs
- Unparalleled learning opportunities, both formal and informal
- Spinning and fiber retreats
- Professional opportunities in the field of spinning
- Exhibit and sales opportunities
- Leadership opportunities
- Ability to try out fiber and spinning equipment of all types prior to making a purchase
- Scholarships for spinning classes and fiber workshops
- Ability to help others through fiber arts
- Friendships and community
- Potential to discover mentors



Handspun and handknitted items laid out on the Peachtree Handspinners Guild show-and-tell table during a monthly meeting, surrounded by the spinning circle.



Several members of the Golden Fleece Spinners Society at a monthly meeting. Middle row, second from right: Lyssa holds handspun yarn made during Spinzilla for Team *Spin Off* using a guild spinning wheel.

Photo by Mary Catherine Lopez

FIND YOUR TRIBE

How (and Why) to Find, Choose, and Join a Spinning Guild

by Lyssa Newport

A year ago, I took the plunge and joined a spinning guild. I had started spinning casually two years ago when my friend Deb Gerish (see page 78) piqued my interest with her posts on *Spinning Daily*. I had just finished my master's degree, so I decided to use my newfound free time learning how to spin. I made myself a CD spindle, watched a few tutorials on YouTube, and made some thick singles during Spinzilla 2015 for Team *Spin Off*. After a year of infrequent spindle spinning, I decided to seek out a group that I could craft with.

At first, I tried looking up Ravelry groups with other thirty-somethings, but I quickly realized that age was not the deciding factor in finding the right group. I wanted to meet other people in upstate New York with a deep passion for the fiber arts, and I wanted to find a group that could teach me a wide variety of new skills.

HOW DO I FIND A GUILD?

I had never heard of modern spinning guilds until I saw one demonstrating at a local fiber festival. I have been a member of Ravelry since 2007, so I searched there first. Luckily, one of my local guilds has a Ravelry group, so I found their schedule and went to the next meeting.

Other local guilds, however, did not have listings on Ravelry. I found out about them by seeing their booths at fiber festivals and by looking at *Spin Off*'s listing of guilds.

I also asked everyone I know who spins and knits what groups they know of and compared their recommendations to my list. To find a complete list of local guilds, try multiple methods to research what guilds are nearby. Other spinners may be your best resource if they have done their own searches for a fiber-arts community.

WHAT GUILD IS RIGHT FOR ME?

Schedule

How often do they meet? Do they meet at a time when you can join them? How many meetings and events do you want to attend every month? When I was researching guilds, I was most impressed by two guilds that I had seen spinning at local fiber festivals. They both looked great, but one meets on Tuesdays when I work, and one meets on Saturdays when I

am free, so I chose the guild whose meetings I could attend regularly.

During the summer festival season, my guild meets two or three times per month including festival spinning demos, and during the winter, we only meet once a month, which pairs well with my schedule as a middle school teacher.

Fees

Most spinning guilds charge a small fee to join. My guild charges a fairly typical fee of $20 per year.

Skill Level

Novice and experienced spinners alike can have a great time in a guild. Experienced spinners may want to look for guilds that teach a wide variety of advanced workshops and that participate in regional spinning conferences and competitions. Novice spinners may want to seek out guilds with spinning equipment that they can try out before buying their own and members who are willing to help them learn the fundamentals of spinning. Most guilds will be able to accommodate both novice and experienced spinners, but some may have goals that align more with one end of the spectrum.

Beginning spinners should not be nervous about joining a guild with more experienced members; keep in mind that when many of those members first joined, they didn't spin as well as they do now! At first, I felt nervous at the idea of joining a group with people who are way more advanced than I am, but members of my guild were very encouraging and welcoming of novice spinners.

Membership Perks

These can vary widely between guilds, but many guilds offer benefits that can more than repay their annual fees. When I was first looking at guilds, I was put off by the annual fee, but I saved money on festivals I had already planned to attend and had access to spinning resources and tools that I would otherwise have had to buy for myself, which was worth far more than the price of membership.

One of the perks that most appealed to me was the guild's annual bus trip to the New York State Sheep and Wool Festival in Rhinebeck, New York. My guild charges $20 for members to attend, which includes a $9 admission ticket. When I went last year, I spent more than that on gas, and I had to drive on unfamiliar roads for three hours each way. This year, I looked at the fall foliage, chatted with fellow fiber enthusiasts, and worked on some knitting during the trip.

Another important guild benefit was getting to try out spinning equipment. Before joining the guild, I had used a CD spindle and a Louet spinning wheel, but I wanted to try other tools before buying a wheel or fancy spindle for myself. Our guild has a couple of spinning wheels that members can use at meetings, and if we like a wheel, we can sign up to borrow it for a month. In addition to guild-owned wheels, my guild also has friendly members who are happy to show curious spinners their wheels, spindles, and looms, and a few are even willing to let members try them out for themselves. Another local guild allows members to borrow several different styles of looms to see if they like them.

VISITING A GUILD FOR THE FIRST TIME

At my first guild meeting, I brought a drop spindle, some fiber, and a few finished skeins of yarn. This turned out to be the perfect thing to bring, because this group starts every meeting with a show and tell. Every member gets a chance to share what they have finished since the last meeting, and most people passed around their creations so we could touch them and admire the craftsmanship up close. People passed around handspun yarn, knitted socks, and shawls, and there were several beautiful ongoing projects to admire as well. My handspun yarn was welcomed into the mix.

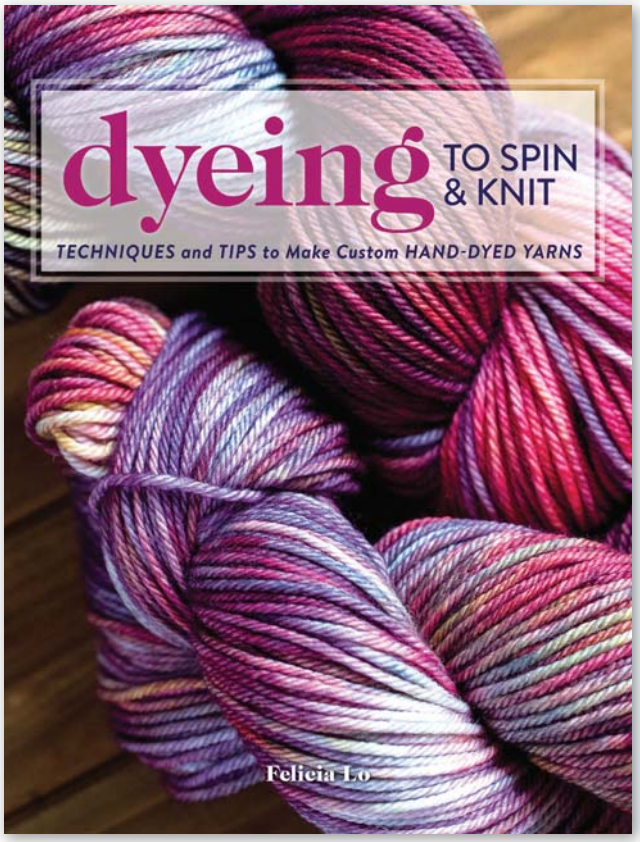
Most people brought travel spinning wheels, but there were a few using spindles, knitting, or crocheting during the meeting. I had packed a simple knitting project to work on in case spinning while chatting was too difficult for me.

Above all, bring your enthusiasm for spinning and any other fiber arts you love! One thing that struck me about each spinning group was the passion for spinning and knitting and how easy it was to talk with members at length about those subjects.

I found a community of like-minded people that invests time, energy, and money into building up new spinners to continue old traditions and who collectively have decades of wisdom to offer to those of us just starting our fiber journey.

Lyssa Newport lives in upstate New York with her husband and two kitties. She loves to sew, knit, and spin yarn while watching animals frolic through the woods outside her house. By day, she teaches middle school French and art, and she loves teaching her students about fiber arts.





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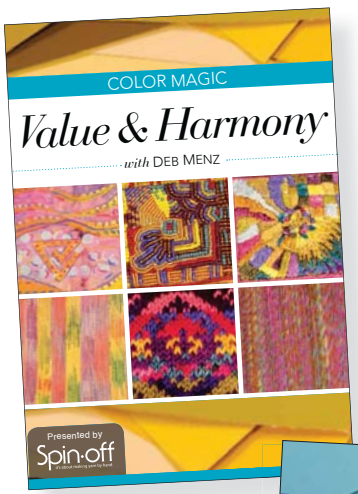
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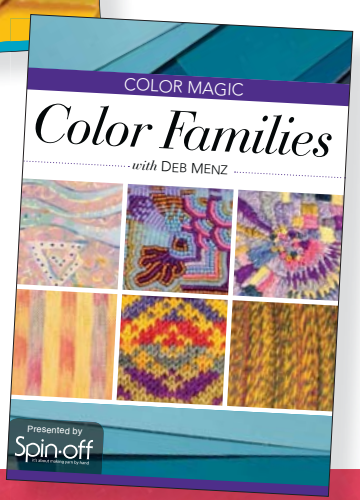
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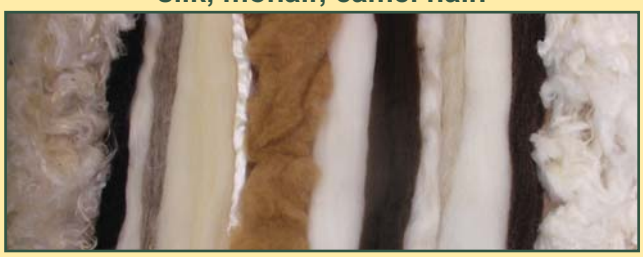
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FACING *Fleece* DECISIONS

HOW I CHOOSE TO PROCESS RAW FLEECE

by Devin Helmen

Spinning is my first fiber love, but fiber preparation is a close second, particularly when I can achieve effects that are not possible from a mill.

I have learned to make decisions and prioritize how I approach each fleece to maximize time, color and texture effects, and effort in the preparation of raw fleece into spinning fiber.

My first time at a sheep and wool festival (Shepherd's Harvest, in Minnesota, my local festival), I walked away with nine fleeces. I can only plead wool intoxication. It left me with a large amount of fleece but not as much variety as I would like.

I learned over the winter that although I loved working with raw fleece, it might have been better to buy a wider range than I had gotten. I decided that going forward I would focus my fleece shopping on wool for specific things I want to make (such as the shiny gray fleece I bought to make a cabled sweater), fleece I want to try out (like the Hog Island fleece I just treated myself to), or fleece I just can't leave behind because it is a thing of beauty.

Fleece shopping is a perennial pleasure of mine, and as I learn more about wool, I learn more about how I prefer to prepare it.

The next year, I had learned my lesson and was able to exercise restraint . . . I bought only six fleeces. Of those six, though, I brought four home. The other two I left with a fleece processor to wash and card into pin-drafted roving. I had learned that I should focus my time and effort on fleeces I really want to prepare by hand and send the others off to a trusted processor who will take care of the cleaning and prep and send me back bags of beautiful ready-to-spin roving. My spinning friends had clued me in to the fact that fiber mills with booths at festivals will take your fleeces right there and then send you back the clean and prepared wool after they have processed them.

DECISION TIME

I have some things I keep in mind when trying to decide which fleece to prepare by hand and which to send off.

What's the Use?

The first factor: what am I getting the fleece for? If I am purchasing a fleece to make a large amount of yarn for weaving or knitting, I often send it off to be prepared into roving. This will mix the grades of wool within the fleece, evening out any variation, and return a uniform product that I can spin up easily into a uniform batch of yarn. I purchased a beautiful Corriedale/Lincoln that is a gorgeous pewter color and had it sent off to be washed and carded. This saved the time and effort I would have put into doing these things myself, and it was a good option because I had a clear idea that I wanted this to be spun up from a roving preparation.

If, however, there are gorgeous color variations, I might decide to prepare the fleece at home. I recently spun up a Jacob fleece that I chose to wash and process at home. I have plans to weave this yarn into twill, using the color variations as part of the pattern, and I wanted to make sure that they stayed separated. I washed the fleece, divided up the colors into five groups, and carded them on my drumcarder. This time, it made the most sense for me to prepare the fiber myself.

What a Mill Can't Do

If I know I want a particular preparation that is not possible from a mill, I keep the fleece and prepare it myself. This spring, I purchased a Coopworth fleece that I will handcomb and spin. Because I want to use



Decisions begin with a lovely pile of unprocessed fleece.



A mill can transform a fleece into a glorious coil of ready-to-spin fiber (here, pin-drafted roving).

Photos by George Boe

handcombed top, I need to prepare it myself. Once I get to it, I will wash the fleece, then set it aside to comb and spin at leisure. I didn't have a specific plan for the fleece; it just called to me from the booth at the wool festival, and I knew that combing and spinning such a lustrous fleece would produce a yarn worthy of making.

Testing It Out

Sometimes, especially if it is my first time working with a breed, I am not sure what a particular fleece will be like. In that case, I generally choose to wash and prepare the fleece at home to give me the chance to experiment, learn what I like, and decide how I want to approach the fleece. I wash the fleece, then experiment with different preparations: hand-teased locks, flicked locks, carded rolags, and combed top. I can learn more preparing by hand than if I send the fleece off to be washed and prepared at a mill.

The Impulse Purchase

Finally, there are fleeces that happen to jump into my hands at a festival. This could be for many reasons: a beautiful color, stunning shine or hand, great farmers whom I want to support, or something I call "wool fumes"—the intoxication I feel when I am around my favorite fiber. When I have no idea what to do with a fleece, I most often send it off to a mill to be cleaned and processed.

THE HANDWASHED OPTION

Anyone can wash fleece. Until recently, all of my fleece washing and fiber preparation has been done in an apartment. It is not something to be frightened of, though until I started doing it myself, I was intimidated. There are many ways of approaching washing fleece, but this works for me.

In the apartment, all of my fleece washing was done in the bathtub. I used three small tubs (the kind one uses to soak one's feet), mesh laundry bags of the type used for washing lingerie or gloves, and soap. These days, I always use Power Scour by Unicorn Fibre, but until I learned about it, I used just plain Dawn dish detergent. (Make sure to get the kind without enzymes.)

I fill three lingerie bags with wool, filling them solidly full without cramming the wool in. The water and soap should be able to penetrate all of the wool. I do not care about maintaining absolutely pristine lock formation, so I just rely on the bags to keep the wool in order. I fill a tub with the hottest available tap water, put in a squirt of soap (a half pump of Power Scour or enough Dawn to make the water slightly blue), gently stir to distribute the soap but not make bubbles, and press down one bag of wool so it sinks below the water. I do not agitate it but just let it sink down. I repeat the process with the other two bins. I let it sit for no more than 15 minutes. (Longer than that and the water can cool enough to let the lanolin redeposit, and redeposited lanolin is difficult to remove.)

I then gently lift the bag by two edges, fold it in half, and press it against the side of the bathtub to remove soapy water, refill the tub with clear hot water, and put the bag of wool back in. I repeat this process for each of the other two tubs, again letting the wool sit for no



To wash raw fleece, I fill lingerie bags thoroughly but without packing, then immerse them in wash basins.



I use a variety of tools to decide how I will prepare a fleece.

more than 15 minutes. This is the first rinse. I rinse at least twice, sometimes three times, until there is no more soap and the rinse water is mostly clear.

In an apartment with limited outdoor space, I gently press out as much water as possible, then spread two towels on the floor. Emptying the wool onto the towels, I spread it out, roll up, and gently press down to remove more water. I then spread the wool out to dry on a screen or on a towel spread on either a drying rack or the floor. If you are indoors, a fan blowing on the wool will increase the speed at which it dries.

With outdoor space, I take the bags of clean wet wool outside and whirl them around and around, acting like the spin cycle of a washing machine whirling out the moisture. Then I spread the wool out to dry.

Once the wool is dry, it can be stored to prepare later or used right away, but make sure it is completely dry before working with it or storing it away. Wool can still be damp but appear and even feel dry. If you are unsure, put a lock or two in a plastic bag, close it, and put it in the sun. If moisture appears in the bag, you need to dry the fleece longer.

This is my favorite kind of wool, clean and relatively unchanged from the raw fleece, ready to be experimented with. The next step is to decide how to prepare the fleece for spinning.

MORE CHOICES: SAMPLING PREP

Deciding how to prepare a fleece is all a matter of choice, and it is a fun choice. The first thing I try is to pick a few locks apart and spin just from the fluffed fiber. It can make a fantastic yarn, and it was how I prepared all wool for the first few years I spun, as I did not have any fiber preparation tools. The next thing I try is flicking the locks, which is tapping first one end and then the other of the lock with a flicker (or flick carder) to open up the lock. This is a perfect technique for working with fleece with color variations or even with dyed locks so that you can keep the locks separate and spin each color either in order or randomly.

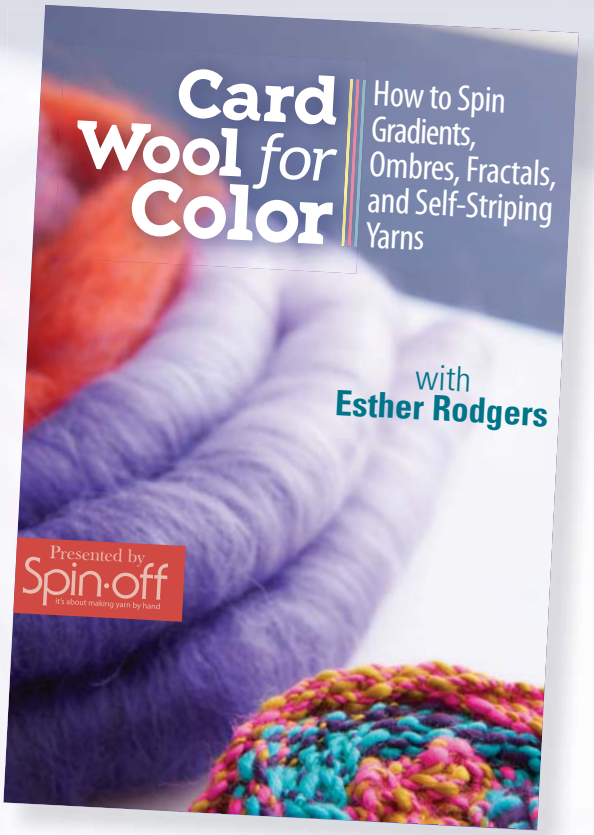
I then card a few rolags on handcards. I sample both a long draw and a short draw with carded rolags to see what the yarn looks like. Finally, I comb a sample of fiber and spin from the combed top. Once I have those samples, I can see which makes the yarn I like best, which is the best prep to remove vegetable matter or to emphasize loft or shine, and which is the most fun to do. The choices are unique to each fleece.

Cubicle Monkey by day, Fiber Fanatic by night, **Devin Helmen** has been feeding his fiber obsession since he taught himself to spin at age eight. He spins, knits, and is learning to weave in beautiful Minnesota. He has a passion for spindles and everyday textiles and blogs, intermittently, at www.afewgreenfigs.blogspot.com.

Resources

Jacob fleece: Joxer's Jacobs, Scandia, Minnesota
Corriedale and Corriedale crosses: Strawberry Ridge Farm, Duluth, Minnesota, http://farmsite.strawberryridgefarm.com
Fleece Processor: Rach-Al-Paca Farm, Hastings, Minnesota, www.rachalpacafarm.com
Podlesak, Anne. "Anything But Run of the Mill." *Spin + Knit*, 2017, www.interweave.com

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THE QUILL IS MIGHTIER *than* . . . THE FLYER?

by Christina Oliveri

Today, many people first hear of the spinning wheel through the fairy tale "Sleeping Beauty." It is not clear exactly what part of the wheel Princess Aurora pricked her finger on, but many believe she received the fateful wound from the quill. A quill acts similarly to the shaft on a handspindle, thus the name "spindle wheel." Many people consider it either a historic relic for reenactors or a rustic entry-level wheel, but there are some who prefer the spindle wheel to the more popular bobbin-and-flyer wheel. Many spinners do not realize the potential of this humble piece of equipment.

HISTORY OF THE SPINDLE WHEEL

Spindle wheels most likely originated in Asia sometime before the twelfth century. Early examples were probably similar to the iconic wheel used by Gandhi in the early twentieth century. As spinning wheel technology advanced during the fifteenth century, the flyer wheel was developed and gained popularity. Meanwhile, the diminutive charkha-style wheel underwent its own transformation and eventually led to the development of what we call a "great" or "walking" wheel. Because these were exceptional production wheels, people continued tinkering to improve the design. Accelerators, such as the Miner's head, were made to retrofit great wheels, doubling their speed.

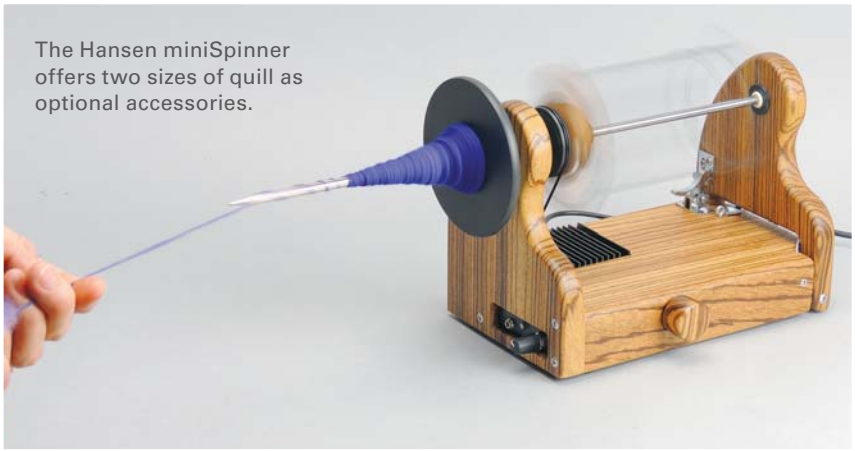
There have been technological advances to flyer wheels in modern times, too. The WooLee Winder eliminated the step of stopping and switching hooks to wind on evenly. The electric spinner (or e-spinner) took the foot power out of treadling and also made traveling with and storing a wheel even more convenient. But what of the spindle wheel? Many spinning wheel manufacturers offer a quill attachment kit for the standard flyer. The mighty great wheel was given a makeover and shrank to become a treadled castle-style wheel, while the motorized e-spinner can power a spindle.



Outfitted with a distaff and spindle, an Ashford Traditional (shown here) or Elizabeth wheel looks like Sleeping Beauty's wheel. (The quill also fits the Traveller, and distaffs are available for all three models.)

Photo courtesy of Ashford

SPINDLE WHEELS 1970S–PRESENT



The Hansen miniSpinner offers two sizes of quill as optional accessories.

Photo courtesy of HansenCrafts

During the 1970s, there was a resurgence of interest in traditional handcrafts. More than a few woodworkers dabbled in spinning-wheel making. A few of the wheels that were created during that time have persevered and continue to inspire people today.

The Penguin wheel was created in the early 1970s. With a spindle beak, drive wheel belly, and a treadle resembling feet or flippers, its beauty lies in its simplicity. In 1979, the plans were featured in *Popular Mechanics* by Joe Provey, an assistant editor. He and his wife were shopping at School Products Yarns in New York for her weaving supplies when they stumbled upon a kit to fabricate the wheel. He published the plans and thus provided a low-cost DIY wheel. When he initially chose the project, Provey was influenced by the movement to self-reliance and rediscovering traditional ways. He finds it interesting that we've come full circle and are going back to some of the ideals of the seventies, reflecting, "Many of the ideas that were revolutionary at the time have become more mainstream today."

In 1979, Rachel Brown developed the Rio Grande spinning wheel, a treadle-driven wheel that the spinner sits beside (like a seated version of a great wheel). The wheels are highly sought after. Brown's granddaughter Teresa hopes to resume production of the wheels soon at the company that she inherited from Brown, Weaving Southwest.

The Fall 2012 issue of *Spin Off* introduced the Dodec wheel, another DIY wheel. The drive wheel is a twelve-sided polygon, or dodecagon (hence its name). Plans became popular through social media sites such as Ravelry and Pinterest. A support group on Ravelry for fans of the wheel, founded by the wheel's creator, Scott Porter, boasts more than one thousand members. He also sells assembled wheels through his website, www.porterthreads.com. Frugality and ingenuity came together with a tagline that read "Build yourself a spinning wheel for $7." Made from inexpensive materials, its timely appearance coincided with the current resurrection of interest in self-sufficiency. Many view homemade spindle wheels as a route to spinning wheel ownership without the steep cost.



Photo by McKyndree Rogers

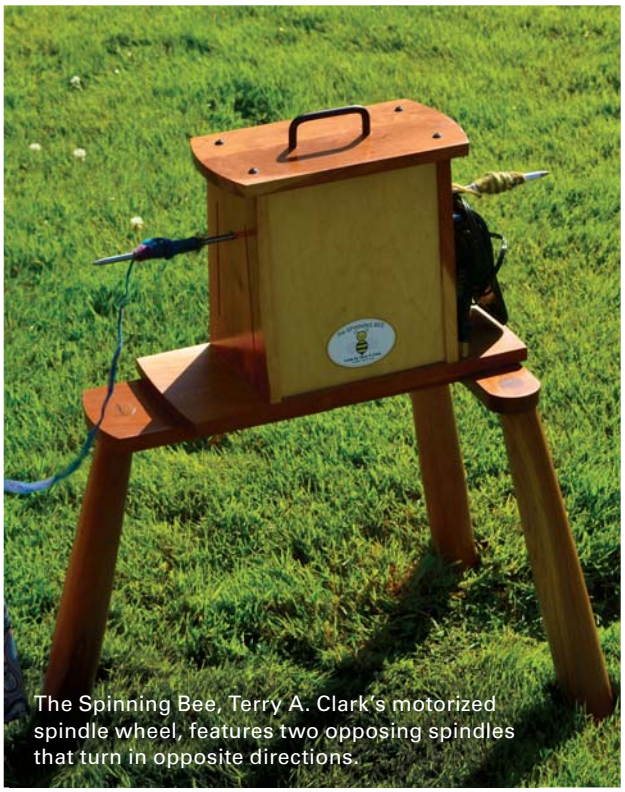
Pegs, pine board, and fasteners from the hardware store make up the Dodec DIY spinning wheel.

MOTORIZED SPINDLE WHEELS

In Virginia, Terry A. Clark of Three Peaks Crafts also began by making a spindle wheel in the 1970s. Using his woodworking skills, he designed and built



A "steampunk" spindle wheel made by Terry A. Clark of Three Peaks Crafts.



The Spinning Bee, Terry A. Clark's motorized spindle wheel, features two opposing spindles that turn in opposite directions.

Photos by Terry A. Clark

a wheel for his wife during their time in college. Years passed and he eased into a life of wood turning. In 2013, his wife was teaching her friend to spin using a traditional flyer wheel but nearly gave up in frustration. Exasperated, she offered Terry a challenge to simplify the spinning wheel. After locking himself in the workshop, he returned with a motorized spindle wheel. It features two spindles, one spinning Z and the other S. What makes it unique is the ability for two spinners to spin simultaneously—a modern gossip wheel! The showroom also holds a collection of unique steampunk spindle wheels fabricated from salvaged parts and manual tabletop spindle wheels made of wood. Recently, he became involved in a project to bring simple wheel technology from recycled bicycles to Mongolia to help facilitate value-added products and help the struggling communities there.

Chad Tudor, of Questionable Origin Ltd., has produced a motorized spindle that doubles as a bobbin winder. He was working on an e-spinner (recently released under the name "The Device") for his wife, Abby Franquemont, that would hold up to her heavy usage. He found a powerful motor to run it, and the project evolved into the Doodad. Proven to spin at high speeds without overheating, the spindle can be used to spin singles, wind bobbins, or ply and wind on a weaving bobbin simultaneously. (At press time, Questionable Origin is focusing on orders of the Device, though more Doodads may be produced in the future.)

SPINDLE WHEEL PERKS

Although most people do not spin exclusively on spindle wheels, there are a few reasons to keep one in your collection. First, there is no limiting orifice. If you are spinning bulky yarns for rugs or art yarns with inclusions, a spindle wheel can open up the possibilities. Esther Rodgers of Jazzturtle Creations uses the stylus kit on her Majacraft as well as Chad Tudor's Doodad. "People find it hard to believe that I use the stylus to spin fine yarn using a long-draw technique on my Majacraft. It's how I was taught." For creating her signature bulky art yarns, she says, "A stylus would be wonderful for plying and using add-ins while plying, say, for a doll head yarn." She does find the spindle wheel to have its limitations: "I find it harder to control the speed and the angle when trying to do two-handed techniques such as core spinning."

Spindle wheels typically sell for less than flyer wheels. Milissa Dewey of Bobbin Boy, which specializes in spinning wheel restoration and custom replacement parts, loves that great wheels are so affordable and easy to learn to spin on. Though she has thinned her herd

of twelve spindle wheels to six, she continues to give wheels to beginners who are starting out. "It's really easy to find inexpensive great wheels. People seem to associate them with poor hillbillies. I once bought a box of random spinning parts for cheap and bought a great wheel by accident," she says. "As I packed up the parts in the car, the seller called out to me, 'Don't forget your wheel!'" To Milissa's surprise, the parts added up to a working wheel and then some.

McKyndree Rogers of eastern Washington is a spinner who has greatly benefited from the low-cost Dodec. "I think it gives you a lot more confidence before you start spinning on a traditional wheel," she says. A friend made it for her three years ago, and even though she has since acquired a flyer wheel, she still uses it as her go-to wheel for plying, as she can fit more yarn on the cop than on her bobbin. She found it easier to spin on a spindle wheel as an intermediate step to a flyer setup. She says, "I like the intimacy and fluidness of the spindle wheel."

USHERING IN A NEW ERA

Whether you are a beginning spinner making the leap from drop spindle to flyer wheel or an accomplished spinner with a bevy of wheels, consider adding a spindle wheel or quill attachment to your collection. Its greatest attribute is its simplicity. Easy and economical to DIY, and historically relevant, it is as valid a form of spinning or equipment as the younger flyer wheel. With no orifice to prohibit the size of yarn, "just come and turn the wheel," as Milissa Dewey invites, and see if the spindle wheel creates a freeing experience for you, too.

To spin on a spindle wheel, the spinner drafts off the point at 45 degrees; to wind on, the yarn is held perpendicular to the end of the spindle. On an e-spinner, this position is easy to arrange; on a single treadle wheel, it is manageable. It may not be an easy position for someone seated at a double-treadle wheel facing the point of the quill.

The quill can also be used to wind weaving or storage bobbins. Placing a storage bobbin over the end of the spindle, wind the yarn on under tension, making sure to maintain a 90-degree angle to the end of the quill. Gently move the yarn back and forth to fill the bobbin. (Unlike a well-wound quill, which is usually a cone shape, a bobbin should be wound evenly.)



Photo by Chad Tudor

Doodads ready to go!

Christina Oliveri loves to spin, knit, and dye and do all things crafty. She likes to collect blue ribbons from sheep-to-shawl competitions with her team, Spin City from New York City, although she now resides in North Carolina.

Resources

Bobbin Boy, Milissa Dewey, www.facebook.com/Bobbin-Boy-426941424134197

Dodec wheel plans, www.interweave.com/article/spinning/dodec-spinning-wheel-plans-by-porter-threads/

Porter, Mary Jane. "Spinning . . . New Mexico Woman Champions Her Art." *Pueblo Star-Journal and Sunday Chieftain,* April 18, 1982.

Porter Threads, Scott Porter, www.porterthreads.com

Provey, Joseph. "Build This Easy-to-Use Spinning Wheel." *Popular Mechanics,* September 1979, pp. 104–105.

Three Peaks Crafts, www.3peakscrafts.com

An incomplete list of spinning wheel manufacturers offering quill attachments:

Ashford, www.ashford.co.nz, U.S. distributor Foxglove Fiberarts Supply, www.foxglovefiber.com

Babe's Fiber Garden, www.babesfibergarden.com

HansenCrafts, www.hansencrafts.com

Lendrum, www.lendrum.ca

Majacraft, www.majacraft.co.nz

Questionable Origin, www.questionableorigin.com

Weaving Southwest/Rio Grande Weavers Supply, www.riograndeyarns.com

In addition, you may find working antique great wheels and new or used charkhas.

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OUESSANT SHEEP

From Brink to Pasture

by Catrina Frost

Standing roughly 19 inches tall and weighing between 30 and 50 pounds, rare Ouessant sheep are too small to meet the demands of commercial meat or wool production. Nor can they boast association with a well-known cultural identity as do Shetlands and Icelandics. However, thanks to some out-of-the-box thinking by shepherds in France and the United States, the breed is proving useful in commercial grazing ventures. Modern grazing programs are taking advantage of their light-footedness, prolific grazing capabilities, and gentle dispositions. These programs could prove a viable solution for preserving Ouessant genetics and could help their numbers increase.

OUESSANTS

Ouessants are a hardy, short-tailed, primitive breed native to Ouessant or Ushant Island, located off the coast of France in the English Channel. They adapted well to the harsh conditions of the island and found favor with the locals, who raised them for their meat and wool. The sheep also had the added benefit of being mild-mannered and inexpensive to keep. The women of the island could easily handle them while the men were out at sea for several months during the year. The women used the fleeces from the black Ouessants to spin and weave their traditional clothing.

Once thought to be extinct, Ouessants can still be found in France, other parts of Europe, and the United States. In the early 1900s, several sheep were moved from their tiny island to the French mainland and were kept in small flocks as a novelty breed to graze estate grounds. Today they are mainly kept as a hobby breed, with the exception of a few small breeding and grazing programs in Europe and the United States.

MODERN URBAN GRAZING

In May 2013, the Paris Archives in France took advantage of the Ouessant's small stature and mild disposition when it hired four sheep from EcoMouton (EcoSheep) to graze the grounds around the city archives. Private companies in and near Paris are also hiring Ouessants to maintain their properties. Ouessants work especially well to replace noisy mowers and trimmers that burn fossil fuels and cause workplace disruptions. They also provide urbanites with a welcome break from cubicles and the busy hustle and bustle of the city.

Not only are the sheep proving to be a cost-effective and eco-friendly option to grounds maintenance, but their presence also facilitated the return of swallows to the Parc des Sceaux located just outside of Paris. The swallow population had completely disappeared from the park, but two years after the Ouessants began grazing the area, the swallows had returned. With the success in Paris, one can easily imagine Ouessants grazing in other urban areas around the globe.



< Marie leads part of her flock to graze at a vineyard.

THE CAPELLA GRAZING PROJECT

In the United States, the Capella Grazing Project is the first of its kind to use Ouessants for commercial grazing. However, unlike urban programs in France that focus on landscape maintenance, Capella seeks to use Ouessants on a much larger commercial scale with a focus on restoring the health of the land. The project began in 2013 when founder Marie Hoff not only found herself in a position to purchase Ouessants but also had the opportunity to pilot a grazing project on a friend's vineyard. Inspired by Robert Irwin of the Kaos Sheep Outfit (a grazing company) and having worked with Ouessants, Marie knew that they would be the perfect breed for instituting a holistic grazing program in the United States.

"I would drive through West Sonoma, past vineyards and orchards, and see all the grass and think how much sense it would make to have sheep graze it. But I was still new to agriculture; I didn't have a sense of how to make it work as a business."

"He [Robert] was a major inspiration to me that it actually could be done; before I talked to him, it was just an idea I had and had heard of vaguely. I would drive through West Sonoma, past vineyards and orchards, and see all the grass and think how much sense it would make to have sheep graze it. But I was still new to agriculture; I didn't have a sense of how to make it work as a business," Marie explains. "Robert really impressed me, because he showed me that not only could it be done as a business, but that it was a viable industrial business. I think both small- and large-scale agriculture are important, for various reasons. But if I thought sheep grazing couldn't work large-scale, I don't think I

would promote it as a viable alternative to mowing [and] using weed whackers. About four months after I met Robert, the offer for the Ouessant sheep came. I wasn't really expecting to start having sheep of my own yet, but because all the pieces were lining up, I just had to take the opportunity when it came."

Operating out of Chanslor Ranch in Bodega Bay, California, Marie manages her flock of twenty-nine sheep, including two breeding rams who joined the team in 2014. The rams summer at a neighboring farm until they return in the fall for breeding. Breeding ewes and new lambs remain at Chanslor, while weaned lambs are sent to work at project sites. The original seven flock members of Capella came from an up-breeding program run by Breton Meadow Farm in Massachusetts. Although Capella is not an up-breeding program, it still plays an important role in preserving both Ouessant sheep genetics and restoring the health of the California landscape.

The Capella Grazing Project focuses on using the Ouessants in a biodynamic land-stewardship approach to restoring the health of the landscape instead of only addressing the immediate maintenance needs of a site. "I take the health of the sheep and the health of the landscape into account when making decisions on where and for how long we graze an area," she says. "We try not to spread thistle or other invasives that do not promote healthy soil. We try to encourage perennial grasses, which promote healthy soil structure along the coastline." Marie also takes care to allow her sheep to engage in their normal, healthy sheep behavior, which includes plenty of room to graze and even social spaces to interact.

As these light-footed ruminants graze, they also fertilize the soil and even till it in with their hooves. The impact from their feet on the soil is minimal and will not damage the delicate roots of trees or vines. This low impact is especially important when the sheep are grazing around and among a vineyard's grapevines or the fruit trees of an orchard that are the livelihood of the landowners. Orchards and vineyards also find that having a flock of woolly sheep grazing their property is a great marketing opportunity. Marie says, "The land-stewardship focus makes us the perfect fit for preserving a rare breed; if we can give these sheep a job, we can keep them from dying out."



Marie Hoff with one of her sheep—an employee of the Capella Grazing Project.



Dual-coated Ouessant wool can be used in a manner similar to Shetlands and Icelandics.

Photo by Joe Coca

OUESSANT WOOL

Interested in working with Ouessant wool and supporting this rare breed? Capella's flock is hand-shorn by Marie herself twice a year. Although Capella does not currently offer skeins of Ouessant wool, it does have a number of beautiful raw fleeces available each shearing season. Fiber lovers can purchase a sponsorship in which the sponsor gets to name a sheep and is entitled to that sheep's fleece for its lifetime, or one can purchase fleeces individually. The wool produced by the sheep of Capella has been certified as AWA (Animal Welfare Approved) wool.

Ouessant fleeces are primarily black and brown with an occasional white. They are double-coated, with micron counts ranging in the mid to low 20s for the undercoat and the mid 30s for the coarser outercoat. Average staple lengths run between 3 to 4 inches long. Similar to Shetlands and Icelandics, Ouessants shed their undercoats each spring. Their fleece can be *rooed* (hand-picked) while they are shedding, but it is typically shorn.

Shearing a Ouessant can be quite a task. Unlike larger breeds, which are fairly complacent while being shorn if held right, Ouessants tend to wiggle around. They are fairly lean, so a shearer must exercise care while working with them. They also tend not to possess the same flocking instincts as other breeds and like to scatter. Once they are rounded up and are ready to be shorn, their small size makes shearing a backbreaking task.

When preparing the fiber of an Ouessant, the coats can be separated out in similar fashion to those of a Shetland fleece. From here, the shorter fibers are easier to spin if carded, while the longer fibers can be combed or flicked. Either preparation can be spun woolen or worsted. The softer undercoat is well suited for socks, hats, mittens, and other garments; the coarser outercoat is durable enough for use as a weaving warp yarn but can also lend texture and strength to knitted items. Ultimately, as with most fibers, preparation and spinning style will depend on the intended end use for the finished yarn. The wool is good for felting projects as well.

Catrina Frost is a Pacific Northwest knitter, spinner, designer, and fiber enthusiast. When she's not happily absorbed in yarn or fleece, she can be found on adventures with her brilliant husband and two lovely children. Follow her on Instagram as @simplycatrina.

RESOURCES

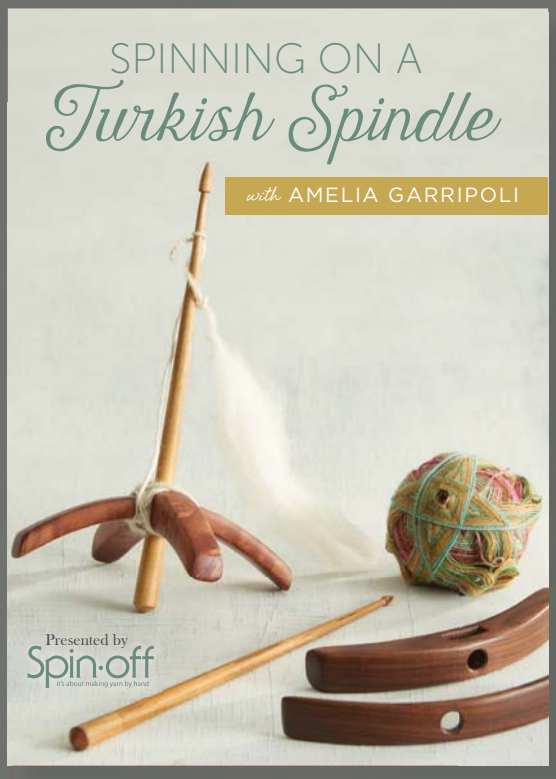
Capella Grazing Project, www.capellagrazing.com
EcoMouton, www.ecomouton.fr
Ouessant Sheep Society of Great Britain, www.ouessantsheep.net

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BUSINESS FOR SALE

Owner/Gilbert wants to sell the Robin Spinning Wheel Business. Will train new owner. Price includes all jigs, fixtures & templates. For more information write: Robin Spinning Wheels, 9 Robins Lane, Parsonsfield, ME 04047

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EVENTS

21st Annual Stephenson County Fiber Art Fair, Saturday, April 8, 2017 in Cedarville, IL. Workshops, demonstrations, and vendors offering fiber plus finished yarn, dyes, books, and equipment. Also supplies for spinning, weaving, knitting, felting, dyeing, tatting and crochet. (815) 541-0897 or **www.scfaf.webs.com**

FIBER FORUM 2017 will be April 20-23, 2017 in Gatlinburg TN. Registration is now open for a wide variety of fiber art workshops taught by your favorite instructors! **www.sefiberforum.org** or find us on Facebook at Facebook.com/SoutheastFiberForumAssociation

SHEPHERD'S HARVEST FESTIVAL Mother's Day Weekend - May 13 & 14. 2017 Lake Elmo, MN Shepherd's Harvest Sheep and Wool Festival is Minnesota's premier event for wool and sheep lovers, the largest fiber festival in the state. Patrons can shop over 130 vendors, choose from up to 35 classes, see over 25 free demonstrations and exhibits and get a firsthand look at a wide variety of sheep breeds. **http://shepherdsharvestfestival.org/**

MA SHEEP AND WOOLCRAFT FAIR May 27-28, 2017. Cummington Fairgrounds, Cummington, MA. A Gem of a fair! **www.masheepwool.org**

COTTON SPINNING WORKSHOP with Joan Ruane. June 3&4 2017 at Sheep and Shawl, South Deerfield, MA. **www.sheepandshawl.com**

Mid-Ohio Fiber Fair Columbus, OH June 3&4. Yarns, fibers, fiber arts tools, and supplies. Demonstrations. Win a raffle basket of goodies. **http://www.midohiofiberfair.com**

Mid-Plains Fiber Fair April 22-23, 2017 First-Annual Fair with vendors, classes, demonstrations, sheep shearing, and llama show. York County Fairgrounds, York, Nebraska **(402) 405-1971 www.midplainsfiberfair.com**

Spinning Retreat Sept. 22-24, 2017 Immerse yourself and advance your skills. Early registration recommended. Contact **810-923-1136. Gatehousefiberarts.com**

Save the Date for the First Annual Tip of the Mitt Fiber Fair! Vendors, workshops, demonstrations. May 20 and 21, 2017. Emmet County Fairgrounds, Petoskey, MI. **tipofthemittfiberfair@gmail.com, www.facebook.com/mittfiberfair**

FIBERS

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DAVID KORTIER

Harp maker



Photos by Penny Schwarze

Tell us about your day job.

I build harps for a living. I am self-employed and have been doing this for about thirty years. I trained as a bassoonist and played for many years in symphony orchestras, but I have always repaired musical instruments as well. At a certain point, I began making instruments instead of simply repairing them, and eventually I settled on harp making as a focus. It is a specific product, yet it involves many different skills to go from the raw materials to the musical instrument that I ship to a customer.

How did you become a spinner?

As a woodworker, I thought it would be an interesting project to build a spinning wheel—lots of fancy lathe turning involved. But it occurred to me that I should learn to spin first so that I could design and produce a working tool, not just a piece of furniture that looks like a spinning wheel. I took a spinning class and found that I liked the activity. I then discovered that good spinning wheels are very affordable, so I bought one instead of making one. I never have gotten around to building a spinning wheel, although I often repair or rebuild them.

Do you have other fiber hobbies?

I have tried everything and find that I especially like doing crochet. Oddly, I have never taken to handknitting, but I love to tinker with knitting machines and own several. My current fascination is deconstructing sweaters from the thrift store using a spinning wheel to collect the yarn.

Do your job and your fiber/spinning hobbies ever overlap?

No, I keep my two worlds apart, but it is handy to have a well-equipped woodworking shop when a spinning wheel needs a missing part or just some TLC.

How does spinning fit into the rest of your life?

Fiber is my diversion: learning about the plants and animals involved, fiddling with the tools, working with the sensuous fibers, appreciating the beauty of the yarns and the finished items made from them.

When I started attending guild meetings in Duluth, Minnesota, which has a very strong and active fiber handcrafters' guild, I was very impressed with the beautiful things that members would bring in for show-and-tell. It was daunting to think of the time involved in producing items of this excellence with my limited "free time." So I made the conscious decision back then that this area of my life would not be goal-oriented. That was the most inspired thing I have ever done—or not done. I spin fiber into yarn because I enjoy spinning. I enjoy knowing about all the tools and fibers, and I enjoy sharing this activity with the nicest people you could hope to meet. The balls of yarn accumulate on a shelf at home, and I never feel guilty about not spending more time finishing projects.

What is your favorite thing about spinning?

My absolute favorite thing about spinning is being in spinning circles. I never miss our guild's Second Saturday Spinning Day, and I never regret taking the time to be there. There is always something new to learn, a friend to get caught up with, or a chance to help someone who is just getting started on this path or to see how others have mastered some puzzling technique.

Do you know someone whom we should feature in "I Am a Spinner?"

We're especially interested in spinners with unusual careers, locations, and perspectives. Drop us a line at spinoff@interweave.com. If we use your suggestion, we'll send you a treat from our stash of fiber goodies! Because of the volume of submissions we receive for this feature, we will only notify you if your nomination is selected.



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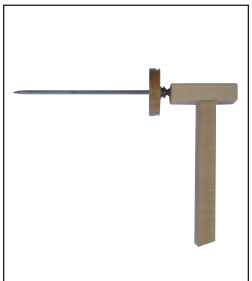


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