SPIN OFF FALL 2020

Spin Off

the art & craft of spinning yarn

FALL 2020

New Tools + ANCIENT CRAFT

What is *Planking*?
Master the Finer Points of Wool Combing

Get *Your* Feet Wet
How to Scour Like a Champ

PLUS!
How to Spin *Strong* Wools

HANDSPUN JERSEY KNITS • WOOL SCOURING • WOOL COMBING & PLANKING

WWW.SPINOFFMAGAZINE.COM

Elizabeth 2

A simply stunning double drive spinning wheel.

Includes 4 bobbins and tensioned lazy kate.

Wheel diameter 24"

Traditional

The world's most popular spinning wheel.

Choose single drive or double drive.

Incudes 4 bobbins and lazy kate.

Wheel diameter 22"

Traveller

A small and beautiful compact castle spinning wheel.

Choose single drive or double drive.

Includes 4 bobbins and built-in lazy kate.

Wheel diameter 18"

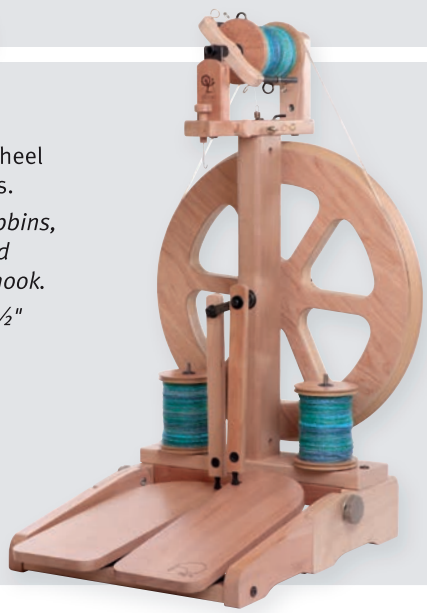
Kiwi 3

Our most popular wheel with folding treadles.

Includes 3 large bobbins, built-in lazy kate and wooden threading hook.

Wheel diameter 17½"

Still at an affordable price!



Joy 2

A very portable and light spinning wheel.

Includes 3 large bobbins, built-in lazy kate and carry bag.

Wheel diameter 15¾"

NEW backpack style

Country 2

Have the freedom to spin and ply an even wider range of bulky yarns!

Includes 1 large country spinner bobbin and built-in lazy kate.

Wheel diameter 18"

e-Spinner 3

The smallest, lightest and most versatile electronic spinner.

Includes 3 jumbo bobbins, carry bag, foot switch and

e-Spinner Super Jumbo

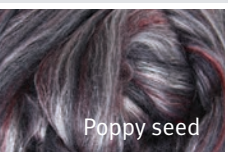
The best features of the Country 2 and the e-Spinner 3 in a super size, portable electronic spinner!

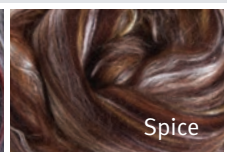
Includes one huge 3lb capacity bobbin, carry bag, and foot switch.

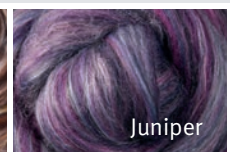
Ashford Silk Merino

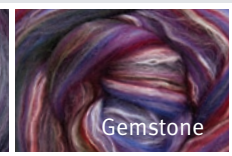
A sumptuous fibre blend of 80% New Zealand Merino and 20% Mulberry silk. Perfect for spinning and felting. The fine 22 micron Merino and the lustre of the silk makes this a truly luxurious blend.

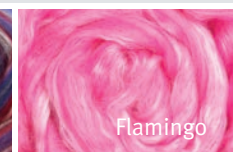
19 beautiful colorways and white.

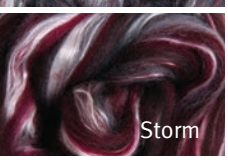


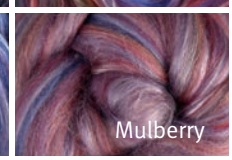


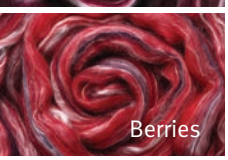


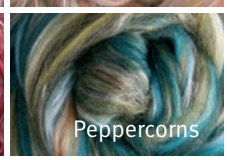


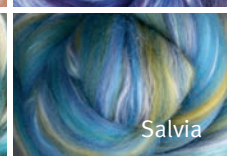


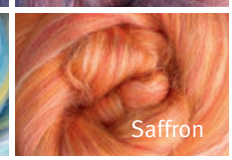


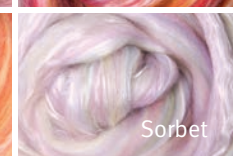


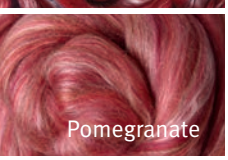


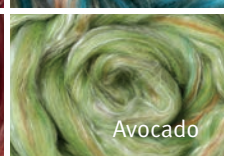


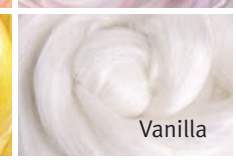












Visit www.ashford.co.nz/where-to-buy for your local Ashford dealer. Dealer enquiries welcome. sales@ashford.co.nz

Made in USA

FREE SHIPPING TO 48 STATES

MONARCH

A solid, studio wheel for production spinners who prefer a fluid, motivated treadle motion and all the flyer options for the entire spectrum of spinning.

$1259+

FIREFLY

Battery charged, powerful and fast electric wheel for spinners who need a treadle-less model that is compatible with every SpinOlution flyer size.

$1219+

BULLFROG

Deep treadle action for spinners who treadle powerfully or need extra momentum with large bobbins for big yardage or bulky yarn.

$899

SHOP

FIND YOUR DEALER
SPINOLUTION.COM

ECHO

Our highest rated, most popular overall spinning wheel model compatible with our most popular flyer sizes. Highly recommended as your first SpinOlution wheel.

$659+

POLLYWOG

Our best selling spinning wheel by model, an affordable portable entry level wheel for spinners of all ages. Orifice riser recommended.

$419+

QUEEN BEE, KING BEE, WORKER BEE

Folding travel wheel with plenty of ratios engineered with extra-shallow treadle motion for spinners who need a delicate treadling experience.

$869 QUEEN, $1012 KING, $1049 WORKER

HOPPER

The first art yarn travel wheel engineered by SpinOlution. A unique treadle experience for spinners who prefer to spin at a specific range of motion.

$1009+

SUSAN'S FIBER

Yarn • Fiber • Spinning Wheels

Comb Your Fiber

Louet Mini Combs

Acorn Mini Combs

Majacraft Combs

Valkyrie Combs

Prepare Your Fiber

Ashford Blending Board

Acorn Two Row Hackle

Blending Table Carder

Majacraft Fusion Engine Drum Carder

Spin-A-Yarn

Ashford e-spinner

Lendrum Folding Wheel

Louet Victoria

Majacraft The Rose

Contact Susan's Today To Get Started!

Felt • Spin • Weave • Knit

www.susansfiber.com · Columbus, WI · 608-575-1470

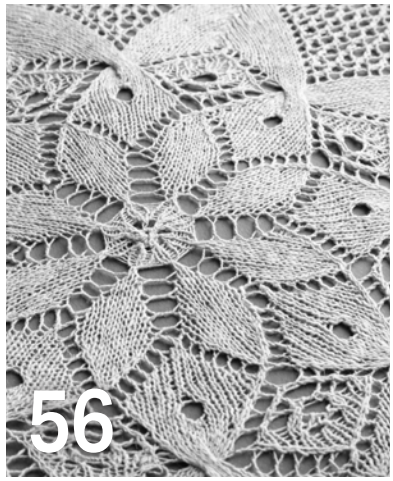
Contents

VOL. XLIV NO. 3 FALL 2020

Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted

NEW TOOLS + ANCIENT CRAFT

FEATURES



On the cover: Two-pitch minicombs from Majacraft loaded with gray, overdyed Border Leicester locks. Learn more on page 40.

Photo by Matt Graves

www.spinoffmagazine.com

- Calls for Entries
- Corrections
- Index of Past Issues

Photo by Dan Waltin

When we think about new tools and the forward march of technological development, it's easy to focus on ways the modern era brings us everything faster, better, cheaper. But spinners mix and match tools from different eras effortlessly. Imagine the common occurrence of spinning vibrantly dyed combed top (one of the fruits of the industrialized world in every way) on a handmade spindle (one of our most ancient technologies) and relishing each and every yard. To me, the most modern piece of this equation is choice. Most of us do not spin out of necessity; we have the choice to follow our creativity.

I am a spinner who loves all the tools. I might wash and comb wool from my Border Leicesters by hand, or I could send it off to a woolen mill. I might travel with a book charkha or an e-spinner. Tools large and small, expensive and accessible, abound in our community. You can make the most exquisite handspun cotton lace using a clay bead and bamboo skewer, as **Melvenea Hodges** did for this issue. Or, like **Micki Hair**, you can use a knitting machine to produce fine-gauge jersey fabric in a flash!

Also in our Ancient Craft, New Tools Issue, **Kim McKenna** details the finer points of wool combing, and **Emily Wohlscheid** shares her favorite drumcarder accessories. In an excerpt from his book *True Colors*, **Keith Recker** highlights an ancient craft renewed: the resurgence of indigo production in Bangladesh.

We can chart our own course, balancing our interaction with tools—new and old—in ways that feed our creativity.

Wishing you peace and perfectly filled bobbins,

Photo by Matt Graves

Micki Hair used vibrant combed tops to create handspun jersey fabric. Learn more about spinning for knitting machines on page 48.

Spin Off®

Vol. XLIV No. 3 Fall 2020

Spin Off® (ISSN 0198-8239) is published quarterly by Long Thread Media LLC, 311 South College Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80524; phone (888) 480-5464. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Collins, CO, and additional mailing offices. Subscription rate is $29.99/one year in the U.S., $39.99/one year in Canada, and $49.99/one year in international countries (surface delivery). U.S. funds only.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to 311 S. College Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80524.
Subscribers: For subscription information, call (888) 480-5464, email support@longthreadmedia.com, or visit longthreadmedia.com. Please allow six weeks for processing address changes. Your customer number on the address label is your key to the best service possible. Please include it with all correspondence to avoid delays or errors.
Shops: If you are interested in carrying this magazine in your store, email sales@longthreadmedia.com.
Contact Us: For advertising information, email sales@longthreadmedia.com, or visit spinoffmagazine.com. For editorial inquiries, email spinoff@longthreadmedia.com. Visit the *Spin Off*® website at spinoffmagazine.com.

VISIT US ON THE WEB
spinoffmagazine.com • longthreadmedia.com

majacraft

USA

ARIZONA

Grandma's Spinning Wheel
6544 E. Tanque Verde #150
Tucson, AZ 85715
Ph 520 290-3738
spinningramma@aol.com
www.grandmasspinningwheel.com

CALIFORNIA

The Village Spinning & Weaving
425-B Alisal Rd
Solvang, CA 93463
Ph 888 686-1192 Toll Free
villagespinweave@mac.com
www.villagespinweave.com

COLORADO

Bountiful
211 Green Mountain Dr
Livermore, CO 80536
Ph 970 482-7746
Toll-free 877 586-9332
info@bountifulspinweave.com
www.bountifulspinweave.com

Blazing Star Ranch
3424 S. Broadway
Englewood, CO 80113
Ph 303 514-8780
blazingstarranch@gmail.com
www.blazingstarranch.com

CONNECTICUT

The Wheel Thing
454 Wells Hill Rd
Lakeville, CT 06039
Ph 860 435-2626
jlynn4540@gmail.com
www.the-wheel-thing.com

IDAHO

The Sheep Shed
76 N. Robinson Rd
Nampa ID 83687
sheepshed@q.com
Ph 2084664365

ILLINOIS

The Fold
3316 Millstream Rd
Marengo, IL60152
Ph 815 568-0165
thefold@mc.net
www.thefoldatmc.net

INDIANA

The Trading Post for Fiber Arts
8833 S. 5O W.
Pendleton, IN 46064
Ph 765 778-3642
tradingpostfiber@aol.com
www.tradingpostfiber.com

KENTUCKY

The Woolery
859 E Main St STE 1A
Frankfort, KY 40601
Ph 502 352-9800
info@woolery.com
www.thewoolery.com

LOUISIANA

Weavin' Place
79434 Deluane Rd
Folsom, LA 70437
Ph 985 796-8048
cheryl@weavinplace.com
www.weavinplace.com

MAINE

Halcyon Yam
12 School St
Bath, ME 04530
Ph 1-800-341-0282
purchasing@halcyonyarn.com
www.halcyon.com

MICHIGAN

Heritage Spinning & Weaving
47 E. Flint St
Lake Orion, MI 48362
Ph 248 693-3690
joan@heritagespinning.com
www.heritagespinning.com

Yesterday's Crafts
315 Basswood Ave
Burtrum, MN 56318
Ph 320 573-5566
baaahacres@msn.com
www.yesterdayscraft.com

NEW MEXICO

The WoolShed
150 Prairiewood Lane
Stanley, NM 87056
Ph 5052046127
TheWoolShed.maplewindsfarm@gmail.com

OHIO

Three Sheep Gallery
164 Wolcott Dr
Boardman, OH 44512
Ph 330 95533600
linda@threesheepgallery.com

NEW JERSEY

The Spinnery Inc
33 Race St
Frenchtown, NJ 08825
Ph 908 996-9004
spinnery@aol.com
www.spinnery.net

NORTH CAROLINA

Earthguild
33 Haywood St
Asheville, NC 28801
Ph 828 255-7818
inform@earthguild.com
www.earthguild.com

Hippie Chix Fiber Art
102 Indian Mound Rd
Cullowhee, NC 28723
Ph 828 293-2420
gailjohnston@frontier.com
www.hippiechixfiber.etsy.com

The Tail Spinner
109 North Wilmington Street
Richlands, NC 28574
Ph 910 324-6166
linda@tail-spinner.com
www.tail-spinner.com

TEXAS

Woolly Designs
37 Dodge Rd.
Boerne, TX 78006
Ph 970 921-3834
www.woollydesigns.com

TENNESSEE

Smoky Mountain Spinnery
466 Brookside Village Way
Gatlinburg, TN 37738
Ph 865 436-9080
nancy@smokymountainspinnery.com
www.smokymountainspinnery.com

WISCONSIN

Susan's Fiber Shop
N250 Hwy A
Columbus, WI 53925
Ph 920 623-4237
susan@susansfibershop.com
www.susansfibershop.com

WASHINGTON

Rowan Tree Woolery
Selah, WA 98942
Ph 509 388-5619
lhargrov@charter.net
www.rowantreewoolery.com

Japan

Kakara Woolworks
2154 Nakasyo
Kurashiki-shi, OKAYAMA-KEN
710-0016
Ph 81- 86-486-3099
info@kakara-woolworks.com
www.kakara-woolworks.com

Canada

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Blue Moon Pottery & Fibre
Andrea Revoy
Creston, BC V0B 1G1
250.402.3795
andrearevoy.com
andrea.revoy@gmail.com

NOVA SCOTIA

Gaspereau Valley Fibres
PO Box 2368
Wolfville, NS B4P 2N5
Ph 902 542-2656
brenda@gaspereauvalleyfibres.ca
www.gaspereauvalleyfibres.ca

ONTARIO

The Fibre Garden
3799 Main Street
Jordan, ON Canada L0R 1S0
Tel 289-567-0555 or
Toll-free 1-855-236-3829
info@fibregarden.ca
www.fibregarden.ca

The Black Lamb
198 Victoria Street North, Port Hope,
Ontario Canada L1A3N3
Ph 905 885-0190
fibre@theblacklamb.ca
www.theblacklamb.ca

Australia

Janet Day My Spin on Things
20/129 Harding Street
Coburg 3058
Victoria
Ph 0425 777 173
info@myspinonthings.com.au
www.http://myspinonthings.com.au

Wendy Dennis
Wendy Dennis Polwarth Wool
64 Skene Street
Birregurra
Victoria 3242
Email: wool@tarndie.com
WEB: www.tarndie.com

Virginia Farm Wool Works
VIRGINIA FARM
WOOL WORKS
9 Serina Ave
Castle Hill NSW 2154
Ph 0448 866 789
info@virginiafarmwoolworks.com.au
www.virginiafarmwoolworks.com.au

Yarnarama
Vaucluse Ave
Valley View
SA 5093
Australia
mobile is 0413 562 076
yarnarama@gmail.com
https://www.yarnarama.com.au

United Kingdom

WALES

Sarah Stacey Handspinning & Knitting
CWMYOY
Monmouthshire, NP7 7NR
Ph 018 7389-0712
hedgehogcarding@gmail.com
www.hedgehog-equipment.co.uk

ENGLAND

The Threshing Barn
Janet Phillips
Unit 10, Reeth Dales Centre
Silver Street, Reeth
Richmond, DL11 6SP, UK
PH 01748 884025 or
01969 663191
info@threshingbarn.com

SCOTLAND

The Wheel Ewe
Ruth Robinson
Ph 07900 633067
ruth@thewheelewe.co.uk
www.TheWheelEwe.co.uk

I HAVE BEEN SPINNING AND WEAVING *off and on for almost 45 years. I learned to spin on an antique great wheel—one made in Appalachia that I found at a yard sale in a little town south of Lafayette, Louisiana. At that time, my former wife was learning how to spin on an Ashford wheel, so, to be different, I picked up the great wheel. I also only spun Louisiana brown cotton. At that time, I was growing the cotton, too. If you ever spin this type of cotton, you will know it's not an easy task.*

Over the years, I accumulated many balls of handspun brown cotton but never put it all together until a close friend, whom I also introduced to spinning and weaving, cornered me into doing something with my yarn. Since I have roots in the Acadian culture and learned my crafts from several experienced Acadian ladies, I wanted to make a traditional brown cotton blanket. My friend started to ply the cotton I had spun, and I started weaving the blanket. These blankets were made in two parts then handsewn together. The blanket has over 3,000 yards of plied brown cotton, and the blue area is just white commercial cotton dyed indigo. I would never dye my brown cotton. I am now working on my second blanket, but it has been slow.

R. Edward Rode'
Hammond, Louisiana

Photo by Lawrence Mauerman

NEVER BE SURPRISED WHAT HAPPENS *when you quarantine a creative mind for months. Let me set the scene: One older woman, an elderly dog, and an even older cat—home alone together. And now, the story begins.*

In 2012, The Wall Street Journal *ran a story entitled "Frog Hair to Woolies: Dust Bunnies by 173 Other Names: Regional Dictionary Travels America; New England's Willywags" by Ryan Sager. My first thought was that I have got to spin some.*

For the last eight years, I have thought often about the article and the challenge I made to myself. This week, I was upstairs and noticed that a tall cabinet had a nice collection of dust on top. Looking closer, I saw three intricate spiderwebs. No dust cloth at hand, I thought I would just blow the dust off. To my delight, the dust clung to the webs and then formed dust bunnies. I collected my treasures and finger spun 12 inches of singles that were then plied into 6 inches of yarn of surprising strength. I have now spun English-, French-, German Giant–, Satin-, and now dust-bunny hair. I am happy to report that I have taken one more yarn off my to-spin-before-I-die list.

Jeannine Glaves
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Editor's note: Jeannine is famous for spinning anything and everything, and then sharing her joyful adventures with our community. Read more about her work in "Spinning the Unusual" *Spin Off* Winter 2014.

Would you like to share your handspun finished object? Tell us about it at **spinoff@longthreadmedia.com**.

MATCHLESS DOUBLE TREADLE

BETTER BY DESIGN

We introduced the **Matchless Spinning Wheel** in 1987 to wide acclaim for its solid construction, beauty, and responsiveness. Barry Schacht reimagined the traditional castle wheel with contemporary styling and state-of-the-art mechanics. Our first wheels were single treadles; then, in 1995, the double-treadle Matchless became a runaway best seller.

Spinners love: the broad range of spinning ratios from 4:1 to 21:1, the perfectly balanced flyer, comfortable treadling, and three spinning modes (double drive, Scotch tension, and bobbin lead).

TOOLS FOR THE CRAFTS WE LOVE.

SCHACHT SPINDLE COMPANY

6101 Ben Place
Boulder, CO 80301
schachtspindle.com

SCHACHT®

Creating a Digital Dye Notebook

Alanna Wilcox

If you're an avid dyer, or just know one, you're familiar with the numerous notebooks hand-dyers keep for recording their recipes and notes. But as with most documents in the modern era, dye notebooks have gone paperless. Looking for tips to convert and organize your record-keeping? Alanna Wilcox's simple, customizable Google spreadsheet–based system adapts to dyers' needs. And if you've never worked in Google Sheets, fear not! The first lesson covers all the basics. In a clear voice, Alanna demonstrates capturing swatches from a dye vendor's website, explains how to enter formulas and alter them to adjust your recipes, and offers tips for keeping track of your custom colorways. One big bonus: the spreadsheets are accessible from your smartphone and tablet.

Rochester, New York: Alanna Wilcox, 2020. Online course, 59 minutes, $50. www.alannawilcox.com

The Long Thread:

Knit, Knot, Stitch, Weave, Loop, Twist

Linda Ligon, Editor

It's impossible to fully separate a handspinner's love of adding twist from the end-use of her efforts. Follow the thread of any textile-related art, and you'll wind up unraveling a story about another craft, which will lead to yet another. It's unavoidable; they're interconnected. Long Thread Media cofounder Linda Ligon compiled this anthology featuring the stories of makers from multiple disciplines. Artist and papermaker Aimee Lee pursued her curiosity and studied the traditional Korean papermaking practice of *hanji* on a Fulbright Fellowship. Her work includes spinning her hand-pulled paper scraps into yarn to create knitted books. Michael Cook reveals the inner workings of how a silkworm extrudes its coveted filament. Each chapter weaves together the connection between materials, craft, and community.

Fort Collins, Colorado: Long Thread Media LLC, 2020. Paperback, 85 pages, $19.99. ISBN 9781735008806. shop.longthreadmedia.com

Natural Palettes:

Inspiration from Plant-Based Color

Sasha Duerr

The 500 naturally dyed silk swatches in this guide inspire readers with the rainbow of hues available from the plant kingdom. Inside, artist and dyer Sasha Duerr presents an array of 25 palettes extracted from nature and demonstrates how the shades can be transformed by using three common mordants. Duerr points out that just because something is natural doesn't mean it's safe for humans or the environment. She cautions dyers to think about exploring safer dyeing methods, such as cold processes, and to avoid heavy-metal mordants, which are often toxic. She also emphasizes the importance of learning about your dyestuffs. The book lists both the common and botanical names for each plant discussed and includes a description of the plants, revealing the story that each one has to tell.

Hudson, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2020. Paperback, 448 pages, $29.95. ISBN 9781616897925. www.papress.com

Indie-dyed Merino Silk Roving

eTc
EUGENE TEXTILE CENTER

Weaving, Spinning, Dyeing, & Felting

Fostering the Fiber Arts since 2008

We have Expert Staff &
OUTSTANDING
Customer Service!

We sell new & used Spinning Wheels

Workshops scheduled throughout the year

Eugene Textile Center is a unique space dedicated to the fiber arts. We support handspinners of all sorts through workshops, books, DVDs, equipment, supplies, and our ever-expanding online presence.

Orders over $100 receive free shipping!

2750 Roosevelt Blvd, Eugene Oregon • 541-688-1565

EugeneTextileCenter.com

WE CARRY ALL YOUR FAVORITES

Ashford • Schacht • Kromski
Louët • Jacquard • Ashland Bay
Unicorn Fibre • Knitter's Pride
Angelina • Nancy's Knit Knacks
Fiber Trends • Natural Dyes

Natural dye materials

WITH THE GRAIN

As a handspinner, you know that fiber plus twist equals yarn, but did you know that pulling yarn from a center-pull ball can add or subtract twist from your finished yarn? The **Yarn Ball Holder** from **Hansen Crafts** spins smoothly so you can work from the outside of your center-pull ball—no more twist changes or tangles. Available in your choice of 10 different hardwoods.

Hansen Crafts LLC, www.hansencrafts.com

Maybe you've tried fusion cuisine, but have you spun on a fusion spindle? The delicate whirring sound of a Peruvian-inspired chac-chac captive ring soothes you as you spin on a **Russian spindle** from **Straddle Creek Spins**. Designed to spin fast, John Hunter crafted the spindle to produce a classic, laceweight yarn. Made to order from sustainable hardwoods and shown in dyed sugar maple.

Straddle Creek Spins, www.straddlecreekspins.etsy.com

Social distancing may keep you six feet from your spinning buddies, but the **Fiber Friends stitch markers** from **A Needle Runs Through It** makes sure the fiber-producing animals you hold dear are near. Each wooden-charm set includes an Angora bunny, a buffalo, an alpaca, a llama, a Cormo sheep, and a Cashmere goat and fits knitting needles up to U.S. size 8 (5 mm). Set of six.

A Needle Runs Through It, www.aneedlerunsthroughit.etsy.com

Fashion a handspun cord with this African padauk curved **lucet** by **Snyder Spindles**. Harking back to times of handmade cords and trims, the lucet was commonly used by Vikings and even Victorian ladies. But there's nothing old-fashioned about the usefulness of this fiber tool. Use the finished cord to embellish a pair of mittens or couch it down in your next artful embroidery.

Snyder Spindles, www.snyderspindles.com

KROMSKI

Great tools for all of your fiber needs!

NEW! sonata Flyer Head

Magnetic Flyer
Sliding Hooks
Ball Bearing Spindle

The new Sonata Flyer Head is a breeze to use with a pre-assembled maiden and spindle.
Comes ready to attach to the wheel post with the twist of a single knob, just like the original Sonata design.
The ball bearing spindle offers an incredibly smooth rotation while spinning. Our innovative magnetic flyer attachment means that you can change bobbins in a flash.
Standard whorl ratios:
5.5:1, 9.5:1, 10.5:1, 15:1.
Additional ratios:
20:1, 22:1, 4.4:1, 6.5:1.

Kromski North America
1103 N. Main St., Pavo GA 31778
(229) 859-2001
mail@kromskina.com

www.kromski.com
www.kromskina.com

ASTRAL REFLECTIONS

One of five new colorways in **Ashford's Silk Merino** lineup, this blend combines mulberry silk and fine 22-micron New Zealand Merino with a 3-inch staple length. This shade of sky blue streaked with wisps of white calls to mind a lazy summer's day spent cloud gazing. Spin up this luxurious blend for a special project worn next to the skin. Shown in Skyscape.

Ashford Handicrafts Ltd., www.ashford.co.nz

Stargazers often wonder what the sky would look like from the vantage point of another celestial body. **Midnight on Mars** by **Creative Space Fiber Arts** captures the shades of a Martian sunset in a gradation-dyed colorway. Hand-dyer Beth Ann McElrea takes her time; applying the acid dyes can take up to 30 minutes or more. Shown in Bluefaced Leicester.

Creative Space Fiber Arts, www.creativespacefiber.etsy.com

The Milky Way is home to the Earth's solar system . . . unless you're in need of a chocolate fix and reaching for a Milky Way candy bar. Whichever served as the muse for **Big Sky Fiber Arts' Milky Way** carded art batt, fiber lovers will find this blend heavenly. The harmonious trio of Merino, Corriedale, and tussah silk spark a spinner's creativity. Spin an art yarn or use it to add dimension to nuno felting.

Big Sky Fiber Arts, www.bigskyfiberarts.etsy.com

Paying homage to one of the most mythical beings in the known galaxy, **Space Unicorn** by **HipStrings** tempts spinners with a galactic-colored rainbow. Blast off on a spinning adventure with a blend of black alpaca, Merino, and viscose. Sparkle is added for a touch of glam. Plan accordingly; you'll want to make something fun and funky.

HipStrings, www.hipstrings.com

Lisa Souza
KNITWEAR AND DYEWORKS
WWW.LISAKNIT.COM

Dear Fellow Travelers,
until we meet again,
throw creativity at 19!

Virtual Field Trips at Red Rope Farm

BY KIM DAY

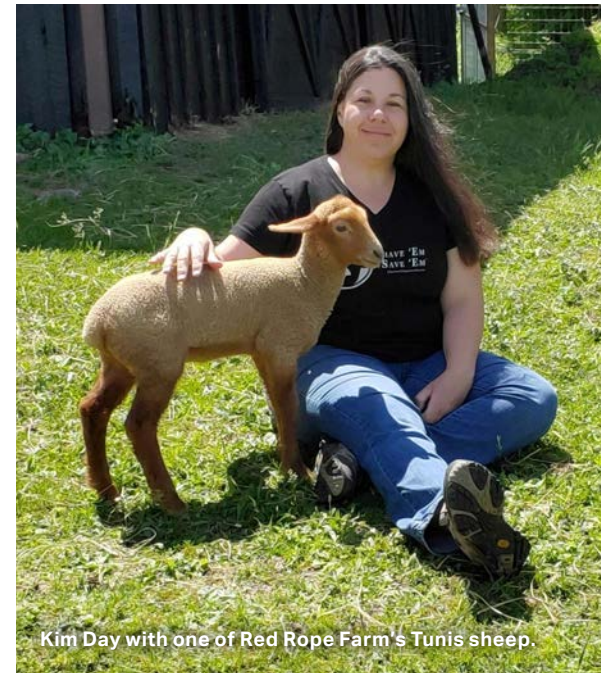
I grew up in a small town in southern New Jersey and never thought my dream of having my own farm would ever come true. My husband and I began Red Rope Farm in 2004 and have learned all we needed over the years through books, the internet, and friends we have met along the way.

Because I can see agriculture through the eyes of city—well, suburban—folk, I have been passionate about educating people about agriculture. I offer on-the-farm field trips for small groups, most of which are school, homeschool, or scout groups. I often post on our farm's Facebook page and website about what goes on at our farm and explain why we do what we do. Our family also hosts a yearly open-farm day, allowing our neighbors and customers to visit with our animals and learn more about them.

Several years ago, when visiting with my aunt who was a second-grade teacher in Las Vegas, Nevada, I asked her what she thought about a virtual field trip, a live online tour where students could see our farm and ask questions. I wanted to bring our farm to children who might never get the chance to physically visit a farm. My aunt thought it was a great idea, but we were both unsure of how to make it happen.

Over the years, this idea sat on the back burner. When Facebook began hosting live videos, I used the feature to share our farm with family and friends, even bringing the miracle of a lamb's birth to them. Some of our friends who are teachers shared the videos with their students.

When state after state began closing schools in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I decided to try out my idea of a virtual, interactive field trip, using Facebook's live video option. Students in Pennsylvania and many other states were told to stay home, but not all districts had begun distance learning yet. I thought it would be a perfect time to use this platform to entertain, occupy, and teach children who were missing school.



Kim Day with one of Red Rope Farm's Tunis sheep.

A Tunis sheep keeps a watchful eye on Red Rope Farm's flock of chickens.

Photos courtesy of Kim Day and Red Rope Farm

As with in-person field trips, on our first virtual field trip, we started the tour in our chicken coops and talked about our mixed flock of chickens, turkeys, and ducks. Next, we visited with our Tunis and Jacob sheep. Finally, we finished up in the pasture with our two Jersey steers.

With each of the animals, I always give a brief lesson in anatomy, because birds' and ruminants' bodies are quite different from our own and are created to function perfectly in their environments. I discuss why we chose to raise the types and breeds of animals we have on our farm. Many of our animals are heritage breeds, and I talk a bit about the history of the different breeds and why keeping the rare breeds alive is so important.

Jacob and Tunis sheep graze in the pasture.

I discuss the similarities and differences between our Tunis and Jacob wool, how wool from other breeds compares, and how some wool is best suited for certain types of projects. I also talk about the steps necessary to process freshly shorn fleeces through to a finished product.

Our virtual field trips are accessible online, both on our website and Facebook page. I also host in-person field trips for groups of up to about 15 people and private virtual field trips for groups of any size.

For more information about Red Rope Farm and to schedule a field trip, visit www.redropefarm.com or www.facebook.com/redropefarm.

A Room of My Own

BY MARCY PETRINI

My studio was the third small bedroom in our house. It contained a desk, worktable, file cabinet, shelves, and small closet—all overflowed with fiber, yarns, books, and magazines. The 36-inch floor loom that my husband, Terry, had built occupied the center of the room. My traveling wheel, the one that went with me to so many SOARs (*Spin Off* Autumn Retreats), moved around the room, changing location depending on what I needed to access.

I jokingly told a fiber friend that the whole house was my studio, but it wasn't much of a joke. Another loom lived in the family room; fiber books could be found in the kitchen next to the cookbooks; I stored a lidded basket full of fiber in the dining room; and fiber, yarn, and projects waited to be wet-finished in

Marcy spinning at her wheel in her brightly lit studio.

Photos by Terry Petrini

the laundry room. This system wasn't very efficient, but it worked for over 20 years.

My beloved daily spinning wheel, the one Terry finished when I first started to spin, would be wherever I spun last: the family room, the front room, the kitchen . . . but never outside. Oh yes, she went outside with me, but the wheel always came back in to be protected at the end of a spinning session, and I'd park her next to the patio door, ready for our next time together. Outside on the patio, in fact, was my favorite place to spin, with a glass of wine and in the shadow of my cherished grove of southern pine trees that shaded the patio from the evening sun. The rustling of needles from a gentle breeze often joined the hum of the wheel.

Early on the afternoon of April 4, 2008, after spending two hours working in a windowless room on campus, I left a building to walk across campus to my office. I had entered in the sunshine, but now the sky looked ominous. I could see that it had rained.

As I walked, my cell phone rang. A friend had called to ask, "Do you know if your mom is okay? I tried to get to your house and the roads are blocked, and the phone landlines are down." I stood silent as I was trying to understand what she said. "I guess you don't know," she added. "A tornado hit your neighborhood." I had to think quickly. Should I go to my car directly rather than to my office? Call Terry? I hadn't collected my thoughts yet when Terry called. He told me that another friend had been able to reach our house. The tornado had gone between our house and the neighbor's. Tree limbs were scattered all over our roof, but our house was intact. Terry formulated a plan. He would go home and call me with an update, and he suggested that I wait in my office.

An hour passed. I couldn't concentrate. No call from Terry. I tried to call him on the cell phone, but there was no answer. I decided that I needed to go home.

It took me an hour to travel the usual 15-minute trip. I encountered blocked roads and traffic lights not working, and the roads that were still open were strewn with debris. At home, I found Terry on the roof clearing it of limbs and branches and checking for damage. From the driveway, I could see the destructive path the tornado had left, as if a giant lawn mower had moved through. I rushed to the patio to check on the damage.

The grove of southern pine trees damaged in the tornado.

My beloved grove of southern pine trees was gone.

Fortunately, all of us, including mom, were safe and the house was habitable, despite the loss of power.

The next morning at breakfast, we could see from our kitchen window that the entire backyard was waist deep with tree debris. Many trees were spared, except the grove, which had been right in the path of the tornado. "What is sad," I lamented to Terry, "is that even if we replant all those trees, we won't be alive to see them big enough to make a grove." "That's right," he answered. "That's why we won't plant trees. Instead, we are going to build you a studio!"

Soon, planning and construction started. The damage to the house had been more extensive than we initially thought, but by the end of the year, I had moved into my new 650-square-foot studio complete with lights bright enough to have the same lumens as outside at midday. It's always sunny in my studio!

Everything has its place now. The traveling wheel moves only when we go off on a new adventure. My daily spinning wheel sits by the rocking chair, but she still moves around the house to wherever I am going to spin next. And outside, there's no more rustling of needles, but a fountain gurgles and adds to the spinning wheel's song.

Marcy Petrini spins, weaves, knits, and blogs at www.marcypetrini.com. A retired professor from the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Marcy lives in Jackson, Mississippi, with her photographer and webmaster husband and four fiber-producing cats.

LENDRUM

Quality Spinning Tools Since 1976

The Folding Wheel has the widest range of flyer speeds available, from 5 up to 44

Available unfinished, in Cherry, Walnut, or Maple.

VISIT YOUR NEAREST DEALER TO SPIN ON A LENDRUM

Homespun Haven
4165 Round Prairie Rd.
Armstrong, **BC** V0E 1B4
(250) 546-3224

Honeysuckle Fibre Arts
9600 Third St.
Sidney, **BC** V8L 2Z9
(250) 656-4201

Fiber Factory
216 W. Main
Mesa, **AZ** 85201
(480) 969-4346
fiberfactory.com

Southwest Corner
8204 N. Frontier Rd.
McNeal, **AZ** 85617
(520) 335-4113
cottonspinning.com

Carolina Homespun
455 Lisbon St.
San Francisco, **CA** 94112
(800) 450-7786
carolinahomespun.com

Village Spinning & Weaving Shop
425-B Alisal Rd.
Solvang, **CA** 93463
(888) 686-1192
villagespinweave.com

Lambspun
1101 E. Lincoln Ave.
Fort Collins, **CO** 80524
(800) 558-5262
lambspun.com

Shuttles Spindles & Skeins
635 S. Broadway, Unit E
Boulder, **CO** 80303
(303) 494-1071

Serendipity Farm
9501 Silver Lake Dr.
Leesburg, **FL** 34788
(757)651-2632
fibertoolsonline.com

The Fold
3316 Millstream Rd.
Marengo, **IL** 60152
(815) 568-5730
thefoldatmc.net

Yarn Barn
930 Massachusetts
Lawrence, **KS** 66044
(800) 468-0035
yarnbarn-ks.com

The Woolery
859 E. Main St. Suite A
Frankfort, **KY** 40601
(800) 441-9665
woolery.com

Webs
PO Box 147
Northampton, **MA** 01061
(800) 367-9327
yarn.com

Maple Row Farm
1059 Cline Rd.
Sherwood, **MI** 49089
(248) 892-3732
dbcline2@gmail.com

Detta's Spindle
209 9th St NW
Buffalo, **MN** 55313
(763) 682-4389
dettasspindle.net

The Fiber Studio
9 Foster Hill Rd. Box 637
Henniker, **NH** 03242
(603) 428-7830
fiberstudio.com

The Wool Room
P.O. Box 96
Hendersonville, **NC** 28793
(914) 548-0496
woolroom.com

Earth Guild
33 Haywood St.
Asheville, **NC** 28801
(800) 327-8448
earthguild.com

Jehovah Raah Farm
204 Dogwood Rd.
Candler, **NC** 28715
(828) 627-3362

Red Stone Glen Fiber Arts
435 Popps Ford Rd
York Haven, **PA** 17370
(717) 212-9022
redstoneglen.com

Misty Mountain Farm
154 Quail Call Lane
Amisville, **VA** 20106
(540) 937-4707
mistymountainfarm.com

Paradise Fibers
225 W. Indiana
Spokane, **WA** 99205
(888) 320-7746
paradisefibers.com

Weaving Works
6514 Roosevelt Way NE
Seattle, **WA** 98115
(888)524-1221
weavingworks.com

Susan's Fiber Shop
N250 Hwy A
Columbus, **WI** 53925
(920) 623-4237
susansfibershop.com

LENDRUM
403 Millhaven Rd., Odessa, OH Canada K0H 2Ho
gord@lendrum.ca (613) 386-7151 **www.lendrum.ca**

My first love is sewing. I teach sewing at Fabricland in Green Brook, New Jersey, and I am a custom dressmaker. I became a handspinner at the 2018 Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival (MSWF). I walked into the raw-fleece tent and felt like Holly Golightly at Tiffany's. It was just the best place in the world. I picked a black Romney fleece and purchased it with no idea what to do with it. Several months (and many purchases of equipment) later, I produced a lumpy sweater, and I was so impressed with myself! I've been spinning for 18 months or so. I've been knitting for around 4 years.

This project started with my desire to have an item to enter into a contest at the MSWF in 2020. My handspinning is, shall we say, not as accomplished as it could be, but my garment design and execution skills are perhaps better than average. For these reasons, I wanted to enter a garment rather than a skein. However, looking at the categories for knitted garments, I saw that all of them specify "handknitting." I am a machine knitter. I don't want to be accused of cheating, so the knitting categories are not for me. The one category that I thought could work for me was the Maryland Wool category, which only specifies an "item" made from Maryland wool.

Photos by Claudine Celebuski

Claudine Celebuski models her stunning machine-knitted sweater.

Overshot Pattern Sweater

BY CLAUDINE CELEBUSKI

Pattern and designer Self-drafted pattern; the Fair Isle design was adapted from a traditional weaving pattern and some traditional knitting motifs.
Fiber/preparation Texel fleece, natural white; Border Leicester fleece, natural black; and orange fiber, hand-dyed with acid dyes. White fiber was washed and prepared on a drumcarder. Black fiber was washed and flick carded.
Wheel system/spindle Kromski Minstrel.
Ratio 12:1.
Drafting method Short forward draw.
Singles direction Z-spun.
Singles wraps per inch White 22 wpi; black 25 wpi.
Ply wraps per inch White 10 wpi; black 13 wpi.
Yarn classification Fair Isle, sportweight; sleeves, worsted weight.
Knitting machines Fair Isle, Passap E6000 electronic knitting machine; sleeves, Brother KH230 bulky knitting machine.
Gauge Fair Isle: 6½ sts × 16⅖ rows = 1" in Fair Isle on the knitting machine (each row requires two passes, so it's really more like 8⅕ rows = 1"); sleeves: 4⅕ sts × 6⁷⁄₁₀ rows = 1" in St st on the knitting machine.
Finished size 38" chest measurement.

With this in mind, I purchased two lovely fleeces in contrasting colors from Maryland farms.

For the design, I wanted something eye-catching but also in tune with the aesthetic of the festival. There were some amazing weaving entries in 2019, including one utilizing a design similar to the one you see in this sweater. I decided this design would work for me. I plan on entering this sweater into the Made with Maryland Wool contest at MSWF in 2020.*

I started with the two raw fleeces: a black Border Leicester and a white Texel. For the Border Leicester, I washed, flicked, spun, and plied the wool. For the Texel, I washed, picked, carded, spun, and plied. The white yarn came out a bit heavier than the black, but they are close enough in weight to work in the same garment.

Claudine used two knitting machines to knit her sweater.

Claudine purchased and processed two fleeces from Maryland farms to spin the yarn for her sweater.

I used my Passap E6000 knitting machine to knit the body's Fair Isle design. The Passap is a computerized machine and a great tool for knitting a large Fair Isle design. I made a bitmap file with the design, uploaded it to the machine's computer, and knitted a gauge swatch using the machine. From the gauge swatch, I went back to the bitmap file and altered the design to fill the space on the front and back of the sweater. I plotted out the entire design rather than using a repeating design, allowing me to delineate the top, bottom, and sides of the design. This machine can knit a design that's up to 180 stitches wide and 240 rows high.

To knit the sleeves of my sweater, I used a much simpler mechanical knitting machine, the Brother KH230. I use it for all of my stockinette knitting.

After knitting the four pieces—front, back, and two sleeves—I blocked the pieces and seamed the sweater by hand. I finished the neckline with a facing made from a scrap of silk organza.

The most challenging part was flicking the black fleece. I found flicking to be time-consuming and hard on my hands. My favorite part was pulling my gauge swatch off the knitting machine and seeing that my vision would actually work! It took a lot of effort and time to get to that point, and I was worried the whole time that this handspun yarn might not actually work with the design that I had in mind.

**Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival became a virtual event in May 2020 and many of the contests were canceled. Claudine hopes to enter her handspun, machine-knitted sweater in 2021. —Editor*

Have a finished object to share? Tell us about it! Contact **spinoff@longthreadmedia.com** to submit your project.

Building a Spinner's Toolbox

Skills, Mentors, and Community

BY STACEY CROOMES

Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted

When I first started spinning, there were many tools I thought I needed. While I still like to tell myself that I need a lot of those tools, I now know that I actually want them more than I need them. The skill of spinning lends itself to stash enhancement very easily, as many of you probably know. As I have increased my skill level and knowledge, not only have my requirements changed but also my definition of what I consider a tool.

A spinner's toolbox can contain many useful items, and mine has grown to include not only those that are tactile but also people and concepts. A good mentor can be a powerful tool, and the tools used to access mentors can increase the effectiveness of the mentor relationship. Where I live in Southern California, I do not have access to a large number of fiber-related shops, retreats, or other places where I might meet people who share my interest in fiber arts. Through those resources, most spinners find what they need to learn and grow. Social media has been a powerful tool in helping me to access mentors such as Nicole Frost of Frost Yarns, who recently reached out to me through her BIPOC Scholarship program on Instagram. (*Editor's note: BIPOC is a common acronym that stands for black, indigenous, and people of color.*) Had it not been for Instagram, I would not be embarking upon my new journey of learning to dye and card art batts for my own fiber-arts business.

CONNECTING WITH MENTORS

I started following Nicole on Instagram because I loved the vibrant colors she used in her yarns and batts. At the time, I was mostly spinning fine wools, such as Cormo, Rambouillet, and Merino, in natural colors because I couldn't see myself spinning anything that I wouldn't eventually wear. I loved to look at all the beautiful pictures of the neon and jeweled tones on Nicole's feed, and I also loved the candid way she related information to her followers. She never hid how she dyed her awesome nebulas or where she sourced her fiber; she was happy and eager to share how to achieve the same results she was displaying on her feed. At first, I thought, "Well, this woman is going to talk herself out of business. People are going to watch her tutorials and buy from her suppliers and create their own masterpieces and they won't need to buy from her." Being the frugal spinner that I am, I tried to do exactly that and quickly learned that it is not as easy as she makes it look on video.

After a few less-than-satisfying attempts, I decided to just stay an admirer and keep spinning my naturally colored fleece. But then an amazing thing happened: Nicole decided to offer scholarships to mentor BIPOC makers in person and at her expense through a post on her Instagram page. Nicole shared that she had decided to do this as a way to increase representation and inclusion for BIPOC makers in the fiber arts.

I was so excited; I could not apply fast enough. I immediately messaged Nicole on Instagram to make sure I qualified; I mean, I know I'm black, but I didn't know if I met the requirements as a "maker." I had long dreamed of starting my own fiber-arts business, but that is as far as it had ever gone—dreaming. Nicole was great; she welcomed me with open arms, took a

Stacey's previous work focused on natural-color fine wools prepared from hand-combed tops. Stacey carefully prepared a hay-encrusted Romeldale fleece for a dirty-fleece challenge online.

Photo by Stacey Croomes

Stacey mixing dyes in Nicole's studio.

Photo by Nicole Frost

One of Stacey's colorful blends on the drumcarder.

Photo by Stacey Croomes

Cormo locks, silk noil, and wool neps dyed with acid dyes and dried in the Southern California sun.

Photo by Stacey Croomes

look at what I had been posting on my Instagram page, and encouraged me to submit an email application. Nicole asked me to explain why I wanted to learn more, to include a description of my past experience, and to submit pictures of my past work. I ended up sending pictures from a dirty-fleece challenge I had participated in on Facebook (another great tool), where I had taken a Rambouillet fleece that was more vegetable matter than fleece and transformed it into a beautifully huge skein of yarn almost the size of my son.

GETTING TO WORK

After I was selected as a scholarship recipient, Nicole and I set a date for a weekend of one-on-one learning at her home. Some of the scholarship spots were made available to recipients who would attend some of her workshop classes, but since I was local to her, we decided it made the most sense for me to have the one-on-one time. We started with learning to dye and card batts, and I wanted to focus on making batts from the fine, natural fibers that I had come to love, such as Cormo, Romeldale, and Merino. I had packed some fleece from my stash, anxious to learn how to card it on Nicole's awesome Strauch Mad Batt'r.

We spent Saturday washing the fleece and, once it was clean, putting it straight into the dyepots. Nicole helped me choose dye colors based on reference photos I liked, and she helped me create a Pinterest board to store photos for future inspiration—an amazing tool for creative work. We also dyed some silk noil and wool neps that I had been hoarding but never knew how to use. I then stayed up most of the night drying the fleece with her hair dryer and a diffuser and then picking out the vegetable matter by hand so it could be ready for carding the next day. I had been accustomed to buying fleeces for hand combing, so I didn't worry much about debris when selecting raw fleeces. For the carding techniques I was about to learn, I needed clean fleece—something else I learned that day!

Once everything was clean and dry and hay-free, Nicole gave me a short lesson on color theory and how to choose colors that complement each other in ways that pop, which is what drew me to her Instagram feed initially. Next, she gave me a lesson on how to use

Photo courtesy of Thom Masat, Unsplash

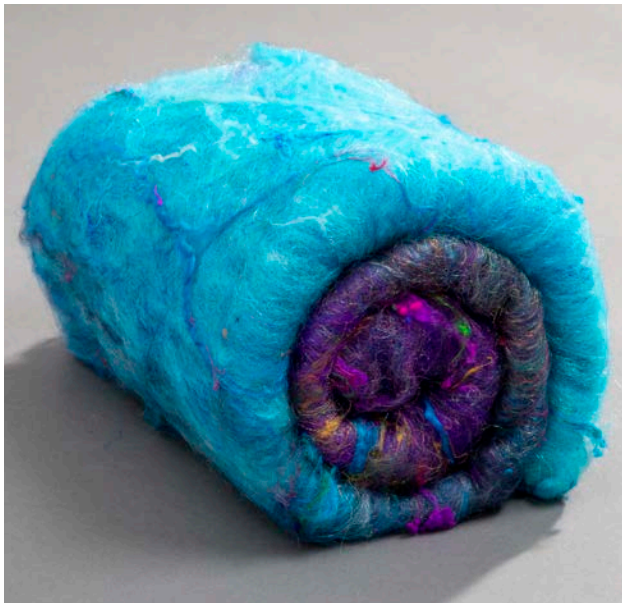


Photo courtesy of Peter Palmer, Unsplash

her motorized, double-wide drumcarder. There was a horrifying moment when I overloaded her carder and thought I had broken it as the motor let out a sound that I was certain meant it was dying. Thankfully, Nicole was able to correct my error and with crisis averted, we created two beautiful batts from my Cormo fleece. So I also learned not to overload the drumcarder—another valuable lesson for the future!

I left Nicole's home that day with a wealth of information. I could choose colors for a batt from a reference photo, wash fleece on the stovetop, dye the washed wool with acid dyes, and card it all together on a drumcarder. Last but not least, Nicole helped me set up my own Etsy shop where I can sell my work.

TOOLS AND SKILLS

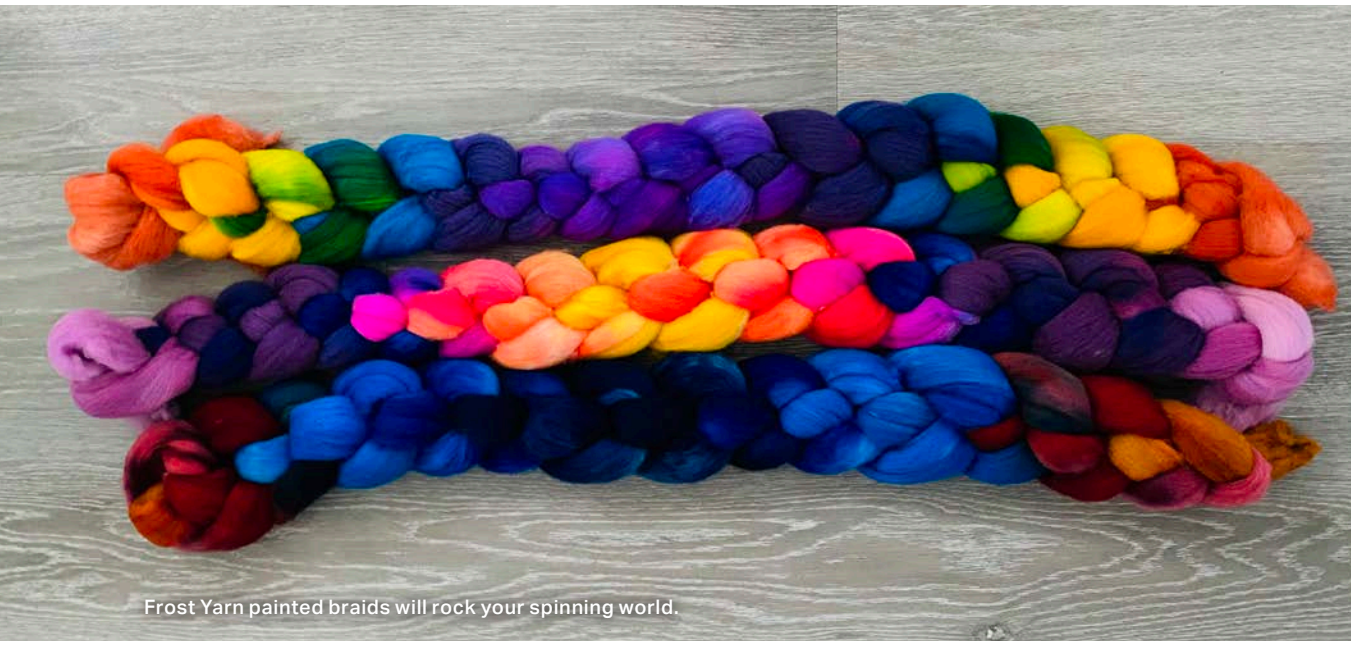
During my stay with Nicole, I used many tangible tools: a stove, dyepots, a drumcarder, and a spinning wheel, all valuable tools in a spinner's arsenal. However, the tools that led me to Nicole's house and fiber arts were not as tangible. Instagram and Facebook have been very important tools in my spinner's toolbox as they have helped to connect me to other spinners and resources that have helped me learn and grow. They have also connected me to mentors such as Nicole, whose mentorship continues to be an important tool.

I have also connected with many other makers who are willing to offer help and suggestions in comments

Photo courtesy of Daniela, Unsplash

on my posts. My online community shares in my journey of learning and growing on my Instagram account. I will forever be grateful to Nicole for offering herself as a tool to help me along my pathway to success in the fiber arts, and I hope to one day pay it forward to other makers by being the tool they need in their toolbox.

Stacey Croomes lives in sunny Southern California where she has mostly taught herself to spin using books and videos. She loves to work with fine fleece and is on a mission to learn everything she can. You can follow her on Instagram @StaceysStash.



Frost Yarn painted braids will rock your spinning world.

Photos by Nicole Frost

Tips for Becoming a Spinning Mentor

BY NICOLE FROST

Editor's note: Stacey Croomes (see page 20) was ready to jump into dyeing and carding when she connected with fiber artist Nicole Frost for a mentorship opportunity. We asked Nicole to tell us a bit about how she became mentor.

Why did you decide to become a handspinning mentor?

When I started out, the people who were amazing weren't really sharing their secrets. It was a closed, secretive group, which made me feel isolated and lonely in my journey to becoming a dyer and spinner. I spent a pretty penny learning through trial and error; ruined wool, bleeding yarn, and felted fleece were expensive mistakes. These experiences inspired me to create a free "ultimate resource" to take total beginners all the way to becoming self-sufficient creators. Novice dyers and spinners depend on good reference materials, but even more importantly, they need to feel welcomed. I will always be there for the next burgeoning fiber artist who is long on creative drive but short on funds.

I'd love to be a mentor, but I'm no master handspinner. Is that okay?

Absolutely! You don't need to be a master, just passionate and driven to share. Not everyone is a born teacher, and that's okay; it's a learned skill. As long as you have that infectious love for spinning and a deep-seated need to pass this craft on to the next generation, I believe you'll not only be effective but you're going to have a lot of fun being the seed of someone's blossom.

Where do I connect with handspinners to mentor?

Check out nearby spinning and weaving guilds, attend knit or spin nights at your local yarn shop, and participate in Ravelry and Facebook forums for your area. Follow Instagram hashtags related to spinning such as #handspunyarn, #handspunstagram, #spinstagram, #spinnersofinstagram, #artbatt, #fiberbatt, and #fiberartist; find people who use those hashtags near you and see if they want to meet up! No knit night at your shop? No local Facebook or Ravelry

Batts and locks in Nicole's studio.

Frost Yarn has a distinct color-explosion aesthetic.

spinners group? Start one! Patience and persistence are key. And don't be discouraged if it takes some time. I didn't start seeing real momentum in my own mentorship journey until I had been working as a full-time fiber artist for about seven years.

What types of spinning techniques should I focus on?

Focus on the techniques you're most passionate about. I teach only art-yarn spinning because I need a constant stream of ever-changing texture and color exploding off my fingertips to pique my interest and feed that creative bonfire in my brain. Some people love the feel of long draw and natural fleece; others, like me, are instant-gratification spinners who want to have a whole project's worth of yarn in two hours. Find your groove and your audience will gravitate toward you.

What tools and supplies will I need to start mentoring someone?

If you want to mentor a spinner, you'll need a wheel or spindle, two if you like teaching people to spin from scratch; if you'd like to teach the full range of carding techniques, you'll need a drumcarder, handcards, diz and hackle, or a blending board; and to mentor a dyer in advanced techniques, you'll need dyes and mordants, dye jars, pots/pans, a vegetable steamer (or something similar), and plastic wrap.

And, of course, you'll need yourself, your passion, your enthusiasm. You are the ultimate tool—the conduit of this precious tradition—and a unique pinpoint of light in the tapestry of the fiber-arts community.

> To see Nicole's free full-length tutorials designed to take you from novice to competent fiber artist, visit www.youtube.com/Nicolefrostyarn. Also check out the Instagram hashtags #frostyarnbatttutorial, #frostyarndyetutorial, and #frostyarnspinningtutorial.

Nicole Frost is a Southern California–based fiber artist who switched addictions from alcohol to wool in 2008. She travels the world teaching dyeing and spinning workshops, and she lives in a wool-stuffed house with her husband, Martin, and two children, Jules and Beatrix.

A sliding-hook flyer from the mid-nineteenth century.

Photos by Dan Waltin

Sliding Hooks and Textile Heritage

BY JOSEFIN WALTIN

One day, I get an email from Cecilia, a spinner who has taken an online class that I teach. I always send a welcome email to students signing up for my online classes. She writes:

> **I usually don't reply to these kinds of emails. I am a stubborn and analogue hermit who usually digs up all the old books from the library archives to geek out alone at home rather than engage in social media. The thing is, I think we are related. Is your mother my father's cousin?**
>
> *—Cecilia*

I used to think that I didn't have a textile heritage. Recently, I was given one. This is a story about kinship, spinship, friendship, and sliding hooks.

KINSHIP

As far as I knew, no one in my family was a spinner or textile crafter. My mother sewed a lot when I grew up, but everybody did that in the seventies. When I learned to spin in 2011, I regretted not having someone close to teach me, to tell me how things had been done, and to pass down spinning tools to me. I, like many modern spinners, rely on YouTube videos and online spinning forums for help and guidance.

Thinking back, I remember noticing that Cecilia's last name is the same as my mother's maiden name. I knew we must be related, but it is an old family with a lot of branches. When someone with this family name turns up, they are usually very distantly related. However, I came to learn that Cecilia is my second cousin, and we had actually met almost 40 years earlier. I still don't get how she managed to find out who I was; we both belong to the distaff side of the family, and my last name today is my husband's.

FRIENDSHIP

When we reconnect, I am thrilled that Cecilia has found me. We start what has become a very warm, hearty, and ongoing conversation. Emails lead to text messages, mostly about spinning but also about our family. It turns out that we do have textile crafters a few generations back, and Cecilia shows me pictures of our great-grandmother Berta's weaving notes. Berta's lovely little booklet from the turn of the last century contains notes in graceful handwriting, weaving charts, and small samples. *Wäfbok* (weaving book) is written above her name on the booklet cover. The "W" and "f" reveal the nineteenth-century origins of this little book, and today, we would use *Vävbok*.

Now, Cecilia and I text almost daily. We live in different cities but have met quite a few times since Cecilia found me in April 2019. We meet up at fairs, conferences, and workshops, all with a close connection to wool and spinning. She even joined one of my spinning courses, which was held on the street where my grandfather—Cecilia's granduncle—lived and started his family a hundred years ago.

Notes from Berta's weaving book include, "Mrs. O's striped cotton cloth. Unbleached knitting yarn, 4-ply number 16. Black Estramadura yarn (only this thickness is available). Weave with 2-shaft. Two threads in each dent. Reed with 13 cuts on the cubit."

SPINSHIP

Cecilia and I inspire and encourage each other to try new textile techniques. We celebrate each other's superpowers: I, her sensitivity to detail and open-mindedness, and she, my structure and curiosity.

> **I think I need a visual guide on how to sort wool. I need to understand what to sort out and why. Sometimes I miss the natural passing down of knowledge from generation to generation.**
>
> *—Cecilia*

She shares pictures of what she calls her Chewbacca Värmland fleece (although she has to explain the Chewbacca reference to me since I am *Star Wars* illiterate), and I share images of my first attempts at backstrap weaving with my handspun yarn. Wonderful exchanges might begin with a text such as this from Cecilia.

Happy holidays! I'm doing some inventory in the storehouse.

—Cecilia

Come on, that's plain disloyal! You can't just throw three antique wheels and a seductive storehouse door at me like that!

—Josefin

Cecilia goes on to tell me how she needs a physical memory of the wool—how different qualities feel and are supposed to feel. She is frustrated that she needs to rely on social media to learn a craft. I text her back with ways to think about sorting a fleece, and we talk about different perspectives on wool sorting for a while. I not only learn what works for her and how she learns, but as a teacher, I get inspiration for new courses.

SLIDING-HOOK SAGA

Cecilia sends me a picture of her three antique wheels in front of her storehouse door.

She asks me about the flyer on one of the antique wheels she would like to learn more about. It has a sliding hook and two end hooks on each wing of the flyer instead of the traditional six or seven stationary hooks. I know very little about antique wheels, but I have seen enough to know that this construction is unusual. I offer to ask around in a Swedish spinning forum on Facebook to see if anyone knows more. The wheel with the sliding hook is from Cecilia's husband's family in Sifferbo, located in Dalarna, and dates from around the mid-nineteenth century. I post Cecilia's picture of the wheels in the forum, and I don't have to wait very long to get a response.

People begin commenting on the photos, especially the close-up with the sliding hook. One spinner

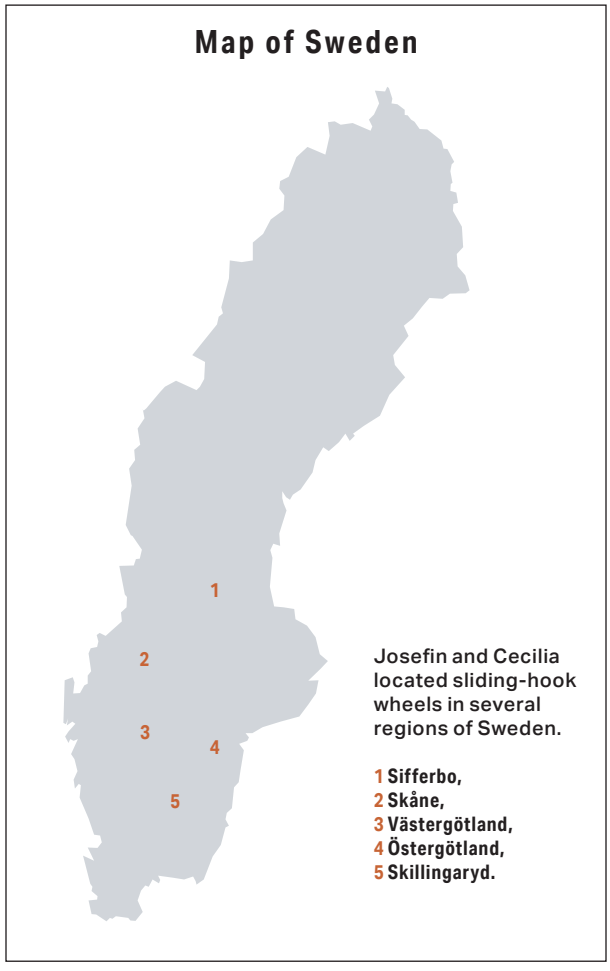
Cecilia's antique spinning wheel against a seductive storehouse door.

comments that she has two antique wheels from Östergötland with the same construction. One of them is a heavy oak piece from around 1850.

Another person who clicks "Love" on the post is Kate Larson, editor of *Spin Off*. Five minutes after I have posted the pictures in the forum, Kate emails me. She asks if I can write an article about sliding hooks on antique wheels and about how Cecilia and I found each other through spinning. My inner voice says, no; how can I write an article about antique spinning wheels when I don't know anything about them? But I also hear another voice saying, "Of course you can! You are a good writer. If you don't know, you can always find out!" Part of that second voice belongs to Cecilia. And I listen to it.

Traveling Sliding Hooks

I show Cecilia the replies to the thread, tell her about Kate's message, and ask if my husband and I can come and take pictures of the wheel for the article.



> **Oh golly, this is so much fun!! The wheel is all yours to shoot and cuddle with.**
>
> —*Cecilia*

Obviously, Cecilia is good at finding information. Before I know it, she has found another two potential sliding-hook wheels on the Swedish Digital Museum website, this time in Skillingaryd in Småland. It is difficult to see the flyers on the pictures, but they might have sliding hooks. I comment on the pictures and ask if there are any close-up pictures of the flyers. I get an email response from the museum manager who tells me that they don't have more pictures, but when I describe what I am looking for, he confirms that the flyers of both wheels indeed have sliding hooks.

I then contact the spinner with the two wheels in Östergötland who commented on my post. She can't tell me much more about her wheels; they were bought at a flea market a few years ago. She says that the hooks easily rust, wear, and break. She also tells me that she remembers reading something about sliding hooks on antique wheels in the Swedish Facebook forum a couple of years ago. I continue searching for Swedish sliding hooks and find four other spinners who have wheels with the same kind of flyer. I contact all of them and ask if they know where the spinning wheels are from. They all reply with useful information. One of the wheels is from Östergötland, another from the neighboring county of Västergötland and one from Småland. The fourth wheel traveled to Norway with a Swedish emigrant.

I set out on another search, this time on Ravelry. I find a sliding-hook wheel from Småland in the Netherlands. I also find one from Skåne in Minnesota, one of unknown Swedish origin in Oregon, and a few other similar wheels but with unknown origins in different parts of the United States. Perhaps those wheels traveled with Swedish immigrants around the same time Berta made her weaving notes in the booklet. Slowly, I learn more and create connections with wheels and spinners.

Meeting Cecilia's Sliding-Hook Wheel

My husband and I take the train to Cecilia's home to meet the sliding-hook wheel and take photos for the article. We sit on the steps to the storehouse, and I get to spin on the wheel. Cecilia and I look over the wheel carefully and find the initials "APS" carved into the side of the slanting table—probably referring to Cecilia's husband's ancestor Anders Persson in Sifferbo.

The treadle is worn in the middle to a thickness of just a millimeter or two under generations of treadling feet. I wanted to feel the surface of the treadle with my bare foot, like I always do when I spin. We move into the storehouse to facilitate spinning, but the door is still open to let in the natural light for the photo shoot. Storm Dennis is wailing outside: this is no time for barefoot spinning, and my shoe stays on.

The wheel's flyer is in unusually good condition. All of the four end hooks are intact, as are the two sliding hooks. They are made of simple wire, bent

Cecilia and Josefin investigate the sliding hooks.

into a graceful S shape. The bottom of the S is larger, hammered flat, and has a more angular shape to fit the flyer with great precision. The top has a smaller and rounder curve to accommodate the yarn. The thread goes through the orifice and either one of the end hooks and lands softly and securely in the curved part of the sliding hook. The hook is easy to slide back and forth on the flyer but stays put when I spin.

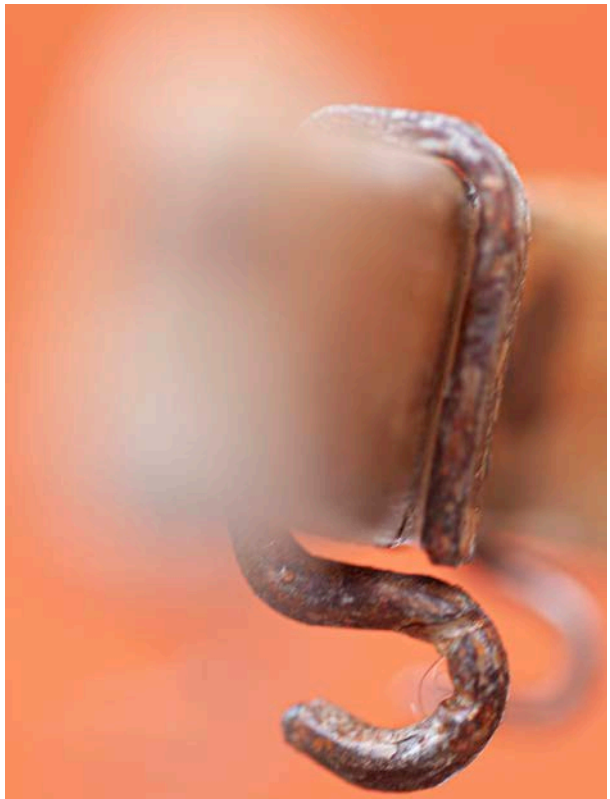
The sliding hook is perfectly shaped to fit this particular flyer, yet it's so like the other sliding hooks I have seen pictures of from different parts of Sweden.

MY TEXTILE HERITAGE

I have found my textile heritage, or, rather, it has found me. Whether or not we know about our textile heritage, we all do have one. The task of producing textiles may have been so natural a part of daily life that very few people thought of writing any of it down. I consider myself very lucky to have begun connecting with my textile heritage through Cecilia and Berta's weaving booklet.

Cecilia, who continues the search, has also found written evidence of a spinner in the family even further back in time—a description of my great-great-great-great-grandmother Christiana: "Dear Mother mostly sat in silence, and while spinning or knitting her socks her thoughts could wander freely. That winter the buzzing of the spinning wheel was accompanied by quiet melodies in manifold keys. Several of them melancholic and with an undertone of quiet safety." I would sacrifice my mother-of-all to see that spinning wheel. The time and place—Västergötland in 1846—suggest the possibility of a sliding hook.

The sliding hooks we found through online searches tell another story of a textile heritage. We don't know how the sliding hooks on antique wheels were invented, why they looked so alike in different parts of Sweden, or why they are so rare. But they are all part of someone's particular history and all of our textile heritage in general. Through the aid of social and digital media, we found some pieces of the puzzle, and we might find some more. Our textile heritage is given a new dimension through the shared stories of people online from many parts of the world. I don't want to be without either my inherited or my online textile heritage.



Just a simple piece of wire, some bending and flattening and voilà—an S-shaped sliding hook that perfectly fits the shape of the flyer arm.

Looking Back, Looking Forward

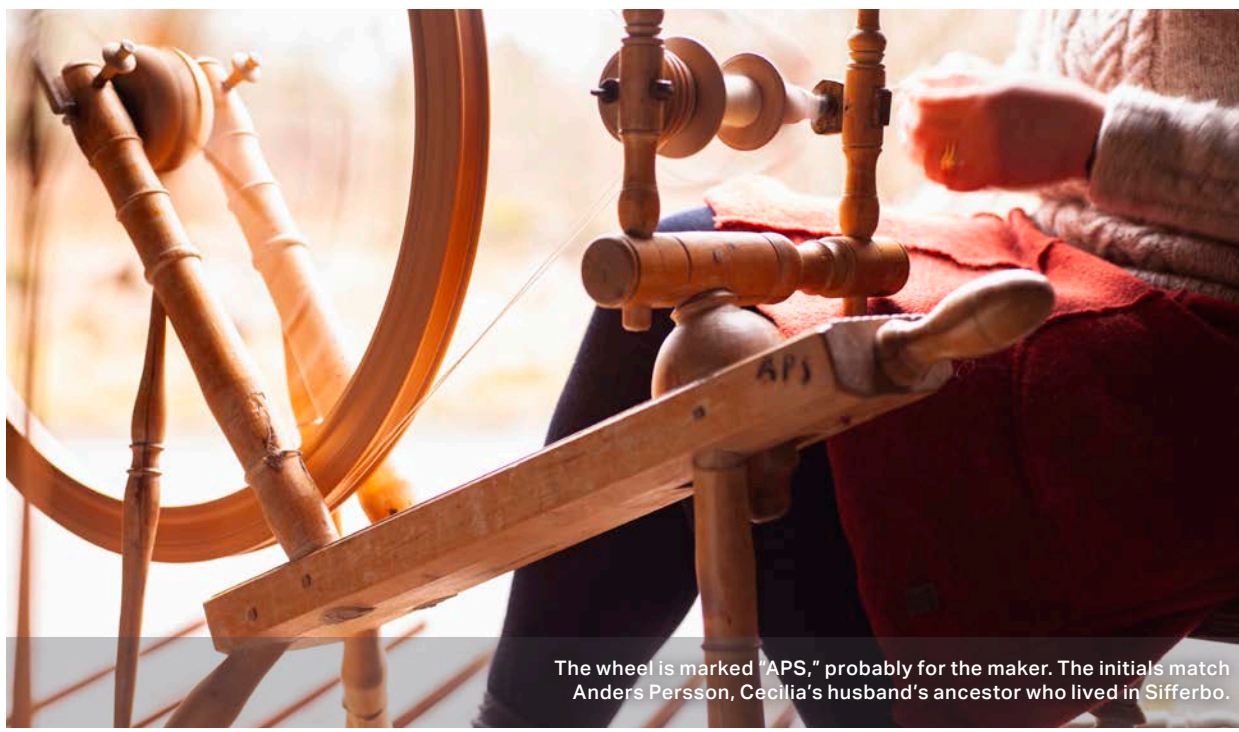
I don't have an antique spinning wheel. In May, I bought a modern traveling wheel: a Majacraft Little Gem. I send Cecilia a picture of my new tool, my bare feet showing on the treadles.

> **Here she is, my new traveling wheel. I have named her Berta, after our mutual foremother.**
>
> *—Josefin*

> **Wow, she's so cool!**
>
> *—Cecilia*

Berta has a sliding hook.

Josefin Waltin started spinning in 2011. She is a spinning teacher and offers workshops both online and off-line. Josefin publishes instructional and documentary-style videos, and she manages a spinning blog from her home in Sweden at www.waltin.se/josefinwaltinspinner.



The wheel is marked "APS," probably for the maker. The initials match Anders Persson, Cecilia's husband's ancestor who lived in Sifferbo.

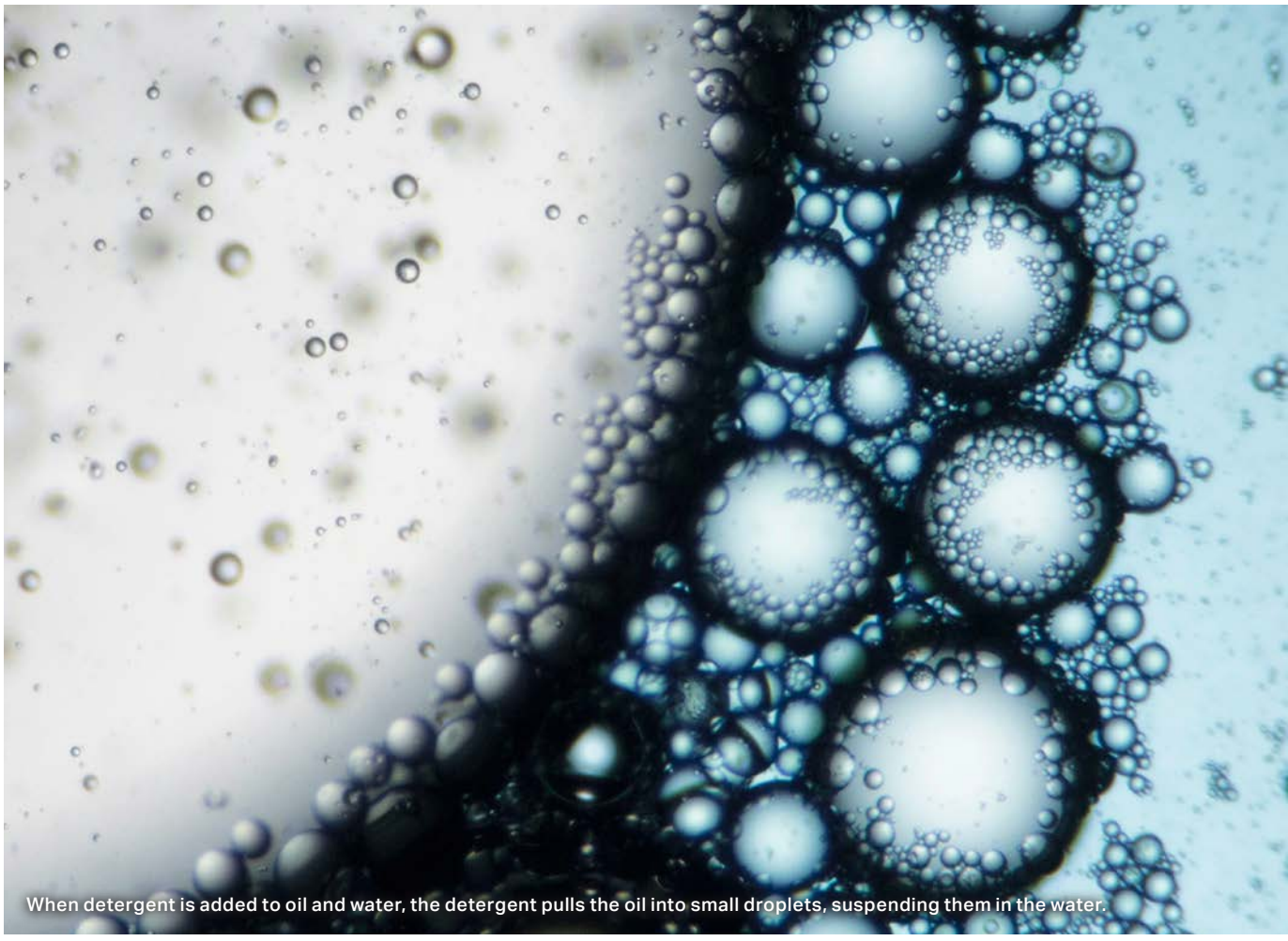


Photo by Geoff Whiteway

When detergent is added to oil and water, the detergent pulls the oil into small droplets, suspending them in the water.

H_2Owhoa!
Water Quality and Successful Wool Scouring

BY MARY EGBERT

Lanolin, also called wool grease or wool wax, is naturally present in sheep fleeces, and humans have been fine-tuning the removal of lanolin and dirt from wool for a very, very long time. Over centuries, we've learned more about the factors that impact scouring. For instance, water temperature, water quality, volume of water, and type of detergent are all important variables. And there are more factors that modern spinners can take into account: Is my synthetic detergent safe for the protein fibers? Is the fleece I want to scour from a breed that is high or low in lanolin? Was the sheep coated? What environment did the animal live in? Although these variables should be considered to ensure a successful outcome, there are some basic aspects of scouring that often get lost in the mix: water quality, water temperature, and how much water you need. All of these factors interact with the detergent used, so that's a good place to start.

MODERN SCOURING AGENTS

Two of the detergents that I find work well for scouring protein fibers are Unicorn Power Scour and Kookaburra Scour. Both do an excellent job in an aqueous scouring method, which combines an ample amount of water with detergent (or multiple detergents). I find that both products effectively

remove lanolin, while protecting the delicate wool structure and keeping fibers healthy and soft. However, all soaps and detergents are more effective in some types of water than others. Have you ever wondered why a detergent recommended by an experienced wool scourer doesn't give you the same results? The reason might be in your water.

WATER QUALITY

Water quality is fundamental to the success of an aqueous scouring method. Soft water is ideal for scouring, while hard water impedes the efficacy of detergent. Hard water, when interacting with the detergent and dirty fleece, can even leave a scum-type film called lime soap on wool, making it feel sticky. You can try adding more detergent, increasing the water temperature, or even scouring several times, but you will not be able to get your wool clean as quickly and efficiently in hard water.

Hard water can be described as *temporary* or *permanent*. Temporary hard water contains carbonate compounds, such as calcium bicarbonate ($Ca(HCO_3)_2$) and magnesium bicarbonate ($Mg(HCO_3)_2$). When this water is heated, minerals precipitate (form solids that can be filtered out of the water), which means you can boil temporary hard water for at least 30 minutes and make it soft.

After shaking the jar, watch for water clarity and the amount of suds created.

Photo by Kate Larson

Permanent hard water is caused by dissolved calcium sulfate ($CaSO_4$) and other noncarbonate compounds. These compounds cannot be removed by boiling, and boiling makes permanent hard water harder by reducing the volume of water.

Is your wool not getting clean and you suspect you have hard water? You can do a water test at home using water hardness test strips, call a local water specialist and ask for an in-home water test, or do a quick test yourself.

Do I Have Temporary Hard, Permanent Hard, or Soft Water?

Fill a glass jar with tap water, add a little soap (castile works well), screw the lid on tightly, and shake. If the water is cloudy with a small amount of suds, you most likely have hard water. If the water is clear and has a good amount of suds, your water is fairly soft.

However, if the water you tested appears to be hard, you won't know if you have temporary or permanent hard water. A second test will help you determine what type of hard water you have. Boil some tap water for 30 minutes. Repeat the soap-and-shake test. If the water is cloudy again, you have permanent hard water; if it is clear, you have temporary hard water.

I Have Hard Water—Now What?

Both types of hard water require some sort of water-softening agent if you want greater scouring success. There are several ways to soften water, some easier than others. To soften water in the scouring bath, you can try a product called pure sodium hexametaphosphate (available from Dharma Trading Company; see Resources). This will need to be added to each bath throughout the scouring process. To soften water at one tap in the house, try a filtered showerhead that removes minerals and makes hard water soft; the scouring vessel will always need to be filled wherever you set up the showerhead. To take broader action, you can get a whole-house water-softening system. If you are not able to do any of these, you can send fleece to a fiber mill for scouring.

HOW MUCH WATER DO I NEED?

The ratio of water to wool is important because of

Mary's Master Scouring Method

1. Fill a tub with at least three times the amount of water than fiber by volume, not weight. The water should be soft, and the temperature should be between 110°F and 140°F (43°C and 60°C) if you are scouring wool and up to 160°F (71°C) if scouring mohair. When washing alpaca, the temperature can be as low as 100°F (38°C). Use a thermometer to maintain a consistent temperature throughout the scouring process and keep within the optimal range for the melting point of lanolin for your fiber.

2. Next, add the scouring agent following the manufacturer's recommendations on the label. Gently swish to disperse the detergent before adding your raw fiber. I don't like to put the detergent in before the water because it creates too many bubbles, and I like to see my wool in the water.

3. ***Gently*** push the fiber down into the water. I don't use mesh laundry bags because I like to pull the locks apart slowly and gently with my fingers to assist in removing dirt and getting the scouring solution to all areas of the fiber. I card most of my fleece, so it doesn't matter if some fibers are pulled out of lock formation. If you are planning to comb or flick your locks, leave the locks intact. If the tips of the locks are extra dirty, you can clean the tips at this time (see Resources).

4. Let the wool soak for 15 to 20 minutes. If the water cools too much at this stage, you risk the lanolin redepositing on the wool, and you will need to start over again. Use a timer so you don't get sidetracked.

5. When it's time, lift the wool out of the bath and squeeze it once with your palms open. This action removes excess dirt, detergent, and lanolin so you don't carry all those impurities into the next bowl. Do not squeeze or knead the wool multiple times or you risk felting the fibers. Set the fiber aside and drain your scour bowl or sink. Note: If you are scouring in a sink or bathtub, use a sink strainer so you can catch any loose wool before it goes down the drain.

6. Scour a second time if you feel the need due to high lanolin content. Repeat the squeezing step at the end of the second scour.

7. Rinse out the bowl and fill it with clear water the same temperature as the scour water. At this point, you can add about ¼ cup of vinegar if you like. Add the wool, gently push it down, and open up the locks. Let the fiber soak in the rinse water for 10 to 15 minutes.

8. You may need to do another rinse if suds are still visible in the fiber.

9. Spin the water out of the fiber in a salad spinner or laundry spin dryer, or you can just roll the fiber up in a towel and press out the water. Spread the fiber out on a rack to dry.

Grab your gloves and get ready to scour.

Photo by Matt Graves

Help! Why Is My Scoured Fiber Sticky?

For sticky fiber, here are a few solutions to consider.

- You have hard water, which, when combined with detergent, deposited a soap scum on the fiber.
- The water temperature was not hot enough to melt the lanolin, or the temperature cooled during the souring process and the lanolin redeposited.
- You did not use enough water during the scouring process to effectively remove all the lanolin. Try using at least three times the volume of water as the volume of fiber.
- The fiber needed to be scoured twice due to excessive lanolin.

the way detergents work. Each soap molecule has a hydrophilic (water loving) end and a hydrophobic (water repelling) end. The hydrophobic end is attracted lipids, such as lanolin. When raw wool is added to a hot soapy solution, the lanolin melts and is released from the wool into the water. The soap molecules surround the lanolin droplets and form structures called micelles, suspending them in the hot water. When the water is drained, so is the lanolin and detergent.

Detergents need enough space in the scouring bath to reach the lanolin and suspend it in water. Commercial scouring machines, called scouring trains, use copious amounts of water in relation to the wool going into the machine. The water tanks or "bowls" are deep and wide. When working with reliable detergents and soft water, I think that a good rule of thumb for home scourers is a 1:3 ratio of wool to water by volume.

THE ROAD TO SCOURING BLISS

Now that you know a few of the fundamentals of scouring, you are on your way to becoming a scour master. Correcting water hardness, using plenty of water, and keeping the water temperature within the range in which lanolin melts will help you achieve much better results. As you experiment with detergents, fibers, and methods, scour small samples and keep track of the fiber type, water temperature, time, and other details so you know what worked and what didn't. With practice, you'll find a reproducible method you can use over and over again.

With the right scouring conditions, even dirty longwool locks can be transformed into a lofty sliver.

Light, fluffy mohair.

Raw and scoured locks from two different Corriedale fleeces. These fleeces were handled carefully to keep the locks intact.

Photos this page by Mary Egbert

Photo by Mary Egbert

Are your fleeces still sticky after washing? Try investigating your water quality.

Resources

Camaj Fiber Arts Fiber Prep Series—How to Clean Dirty Tips, https://youtu.be/sKTDBROqYgg

Dharma Trading Company, www.dharmatrading.com

Egbert, Mary. ***The Art of Washing Wool, Mohair and Alpaca***. Self-published, 2019.

Raymond, Robert S., and Stuart L. Mandell. ***Wool Grease: The Economics of Recovery and Utilization in the United States***. Washington, DC: USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, 1955.

Tímár-Balázsy, Ágnes, and Dinah Eastop. ***Chemical Principles of Textile Conservation***. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998.

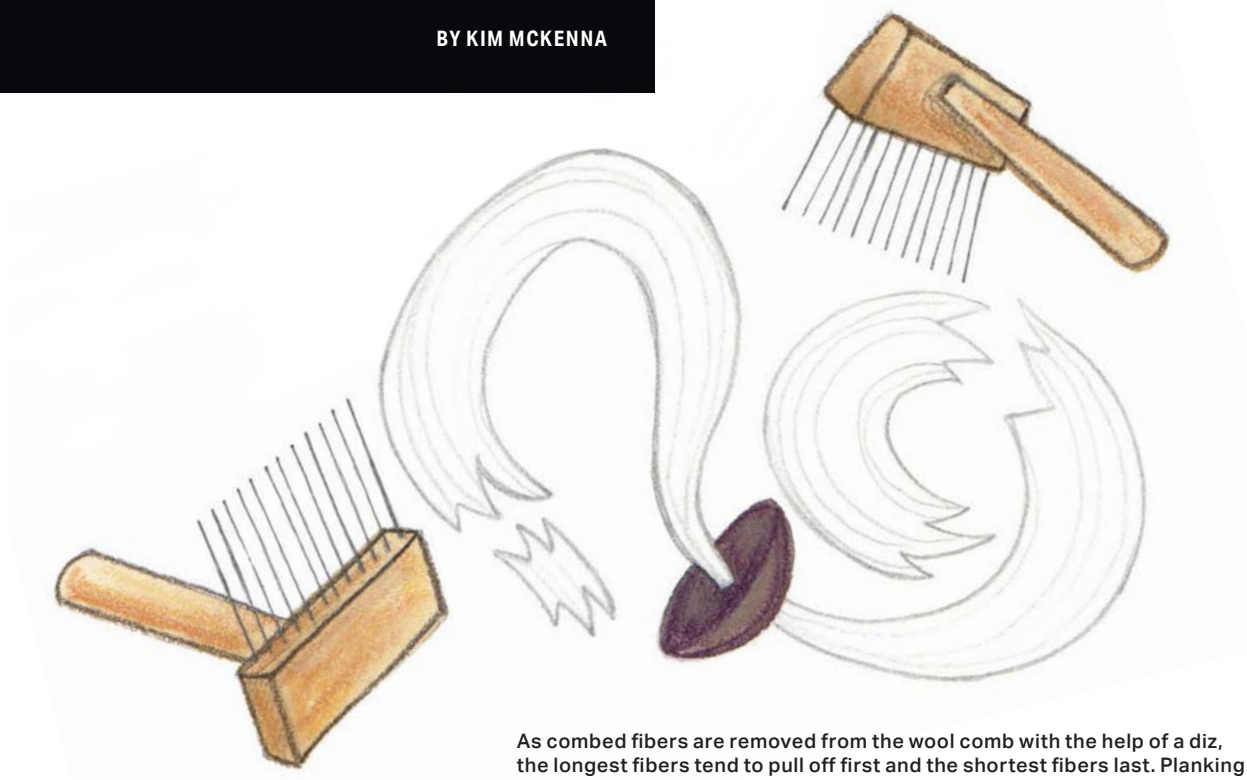
Sengupta, Pallav. "Potential Health Impacts of Hard Water." ***International Journal of Preventive Medicine*** 4, 8 (August 2013), 866–875.

Woolwise: Australian Wool Education Trust, www.woolwise.com

Mary Egbert's fiber journey started in 2005 when she and her husband raised a herd of 25 alpacas. She has been a physical therapist since 1995, and as a natural-born researcher, she embarked on a quest to spin a balanced yarn and beyond. Mary is the owner of Camaj Fiber Arts and the Spinning Box, a monthly subscription fiber box. Her passion for scouring led her to write the book *The Art of Washing Wool, Mohair and Alpaca,* available on Amazon. Learn more at www.camajfiberarts.com.

Wool Combing & the Importance of Planking

BY KIM MCKENNA



Illustrations by Katie Eberts

As combed fibers are removed from the wool comb with the help of a diz, the longest fibers tend to pull off first and the shortest fibers last. Planking can help to redistribute the different lengths of fiber prior to spinning.

Well-prepared, combed sliver is the ultimate in fiber preparation for a worsted spin. One step often bypassed when preparing hand-combed sliver is *planking*. More often than not, in their haste to get to their wheels and spindles, spinners simply lash wool locks onto their combs, *jig* (the action of combing), *diz* (attenuating the fibers by funneling and pulling them through a small hole) and *wind* the sliver into a tidy nest. If the fiber does not go through an additional blending process called planking, a combed sliver may not be as even and consistent as it appears.

WHAT IS PLANKING?

Wool combing separates second cuts, neps, noils, vegetable matter, and the shortest tufts of fiber from the longer, stronger fibers needed for traditional worsted spinning. However, combing also sorts the fibers by staple length from longest to shortest as the sliver of prepared fibers is pulled from the combs. Planking redistributes the various fiber lengths along the finished sliver's full length.

The action of planking is simply breaking the length of sliver that was pulled through the diz into

shorter lengths, laying (or planking) the shorter pieces side by side, and then scooping them up in a handful as shown on page 44, and lashing the planked lengths back onto the combs for further processing.

The difference between unplanked and planked fibers becomes more evident as you spin. If the planking step is omitted, the sliver will have the longest fibers at one end and the shortest fibers at the other end. This means that when spinning with a worsted draw, where each draft length is determined by fiber length, you need to adjust your draft to accommodate the changing fiber length as you spin from one end of the sliver to the other. The result? A less consistent handspun yarn. On the other hand, if the sliver has been planked and the different fiber lengths are well distributed, it will be easier for you to spin a yarn with consistent twist and grist.

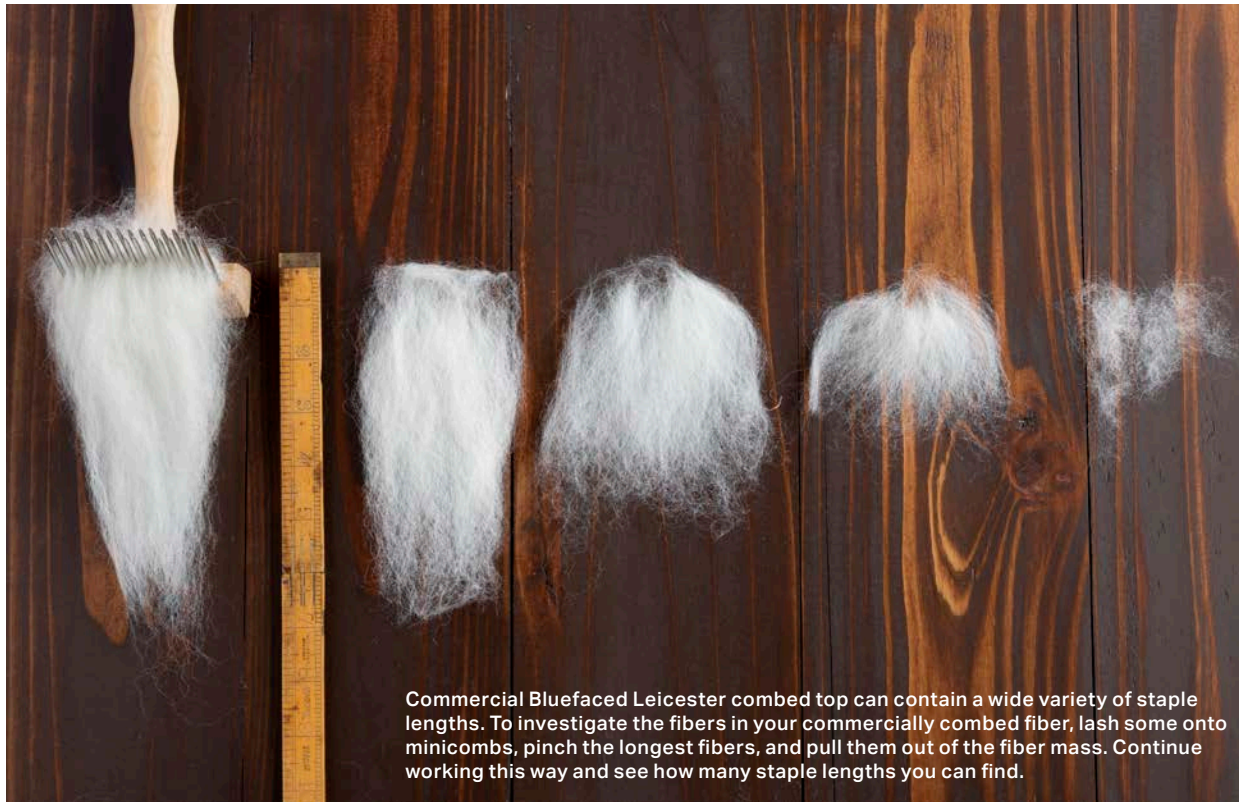
THE ART OF WOOL COMBING BY HAND

Mindful fiber preparation has a direct correlation to the quality of your handspun. The method and steps presented here are a combination of what I learned from Peter Teal's excellent book, *Hand Woolcombing and Spinning*; Allen Fannin's extremely informative book, *Handspinning: Art and Technique*; and my own experience.

> **General Principles of Combing**—There are three main factors involved in combing: first, the straightening of the fibres treated; second, the equalising of the fibre length; and third, the removal of all neps and blemishes of whatever nature they may be.
>
> —*Wool Carding and Combing* (1912)

Tools and Materials

The first order of business in the wool-combing tradition is the application of oil and water to well-scoured, medium-long to extralong wool staples. To prepare 20 grams of wool, I use 3 milliliters of oil and 3 milliliters of water, each applied with separate



Commercial Bluefaced Leicester combed top can contain a wide variety of staple lengths. To investigate the fibers in your commercially combed fiber, lash some onto minicombs, pinch the longest fibers, and pull them out of the fiber mass. Continue working this way and see how many staple lengths you can find.

Photos by Matt Graves

How Long Are Your Locks?

I prefer to comb fiber that is medium-long to extralong. Fiber with staple lengths under 4 inches can also be combed. It is, however, a little more challenging and can result in more waste.

Staple Length Definitions

Short 2 to 3 inches

Medium 3 to 4 inches

Medium Long 4 to 5 inches

Long to Extralong 5 inches and longer

(From left) Bond, Polwarth, and Perendale locks.

misters. How do I know how many mister pumps equal 3 milliliters? Using a 10- or 20-milliliter syringe with the plunger removed, I place my thumb over the hole in the bottom, spray the mister into the syringe, and count how many pumps of the mister equals 3 milliliters.

Many lubricants have been used over time, but I often use olive oil or neat's-foot oil. These oils can leave some fibers with a faint yellow cast, especially if it is a long time between the oil application and scouring the finished yarn. If I plan to dye the yarn, this is not of concern, but if I will be using the yarn undyed, I instead mist with water mixed with a few drops of hair conditioner.

Valkyrie Extrafine Combs (2-pitch) lashed with Cormo wool.

Step 1 Misting

Spread a clean tea towel over a protected surface and arrange the well-scoured wool staples in close rows, with butt ends (the ends cut during shearing) and tip ends aligned. Mist the staples first with half the oil and then half the water before turning them over to mist the reverse side. With both sides misted, slip the towel into a plastic bag and place the open bag in a cozy, warm spot for a minimum of 30 minutes prior to combing.

Step 2 Lashing On

If your combs are designed so that one comb can be secured to a surface, this is your stationary comb. If your minicombs are both held in the hand, either comb can be the "stationary" comb in the following instructions. When lashing locks onto my four-pitch stationary comb, I hold each staple by the tip end, lash the butt end onto the front two rows of tines and pull the staple down the tines. When loading two-pitch combs, I lash the fibers on the two rows of tines and about ¼ inch (0.5 cm) will stick out the back. I continue until the comb is evenly loaded across its full width and up to one-third of its height. I place an index finger under the bed of locks, pushing them up about ¼ inch (0.5 cm) from the base of the tines. If I do not move the fiber up off the head, it is more difficult for the fiber to release and move from one comb to the other.

Step 3 Jigging

The chopping action of combing was traditionally called jigging. With this style of combs, jigging

commences with the tines of the moving (empty) comb placed at a right angle to the stationary comb. Using the moving comb in a side-to-side chopping motion, start jigging at the tips of the locks and gradually work the moving comb deeper into the fiber (Figure 1).

When about half the fiber has been transferred to the moving comb, loosen the fibers on the moving comb by pushing the locks up off the head of the comb and start jigging using an up-and-down chopping motion to transfer the fiber back to the stationary comb (Figure 2). Jigging the fiber from the stationary comb to the moving comb and back again is considered one pass. It usually takes a few passes to fully open up the staples. If static develops, give a light spritz with the water mister.

Step 4 Doffing

When you are satisfied that the locks are nicely opened, *doff* (remove) one continuous length of fiber from the combs using a hand-over-hand motion. Grasp the end of the fibers on the stationary comb and pull out about half of the staple length. Then, repeat this motion with the other hand. Continue the hand-over-hand motion until neps or noils that were caught in the comb start to work their way into the length of fiber.

Pull off the combed fiber and discard the neps and noils. Next, the butt end of doffed fiber is lashed onto the stationary comb's front two rows of tines. The fiber is jigged a second time to further straighten the fiber, ending with most of the fiber on the stationary comb.

Step 5 First Dizzing

I prefer to use a diz with a large orifice that is light enough to sit on the sliver without being held. For this technique, one hand pinches the sliver from side to side and the other from top and bottom to create an even sliver with few thin spots. *(Editor's note: visit www.spinoffmagazine.com for more on Kim's technique.)*

First, give the fiber a few light strokes with your hands to gently coax the fiber into a triangular shape. With the curved face of the diz facing the combs, draw the tip of the fiber through the orifice. With your right hand only, pinch the fiber from top and bottom,

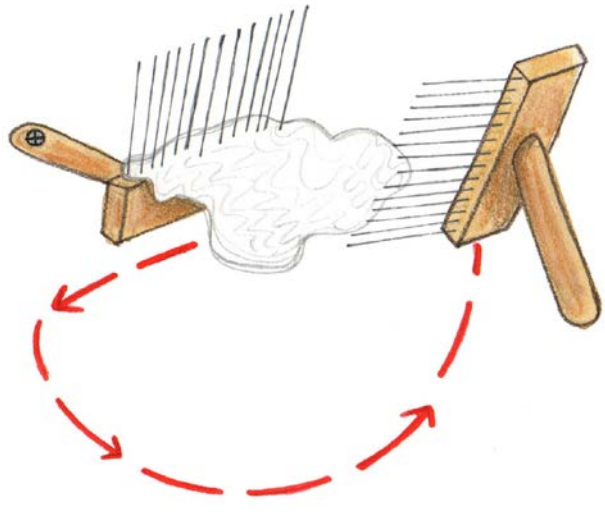


Figure 1
Side-to-side jigging.

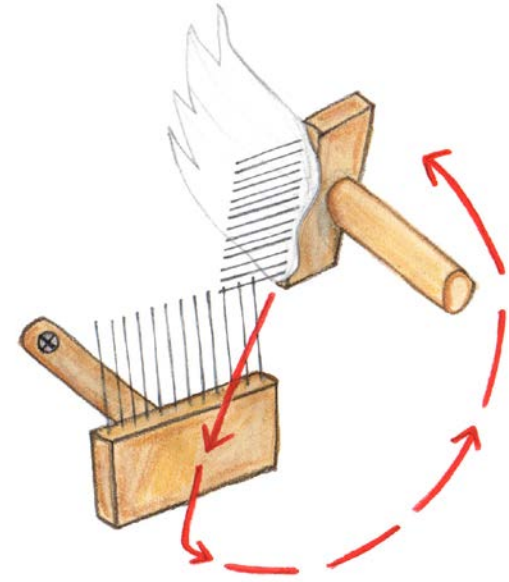


Figure 2
Top-to-bottom jigging.

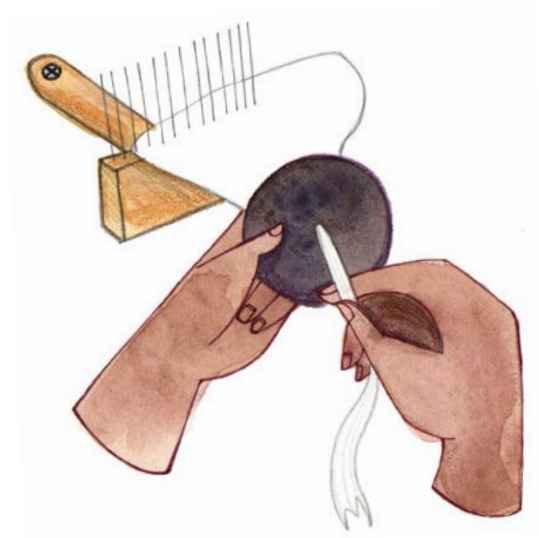


Figure 3
When the right hand has pinched the fiber from top and bottom and pulled the fiber forward, the left hand moves the diz back into the fiber.

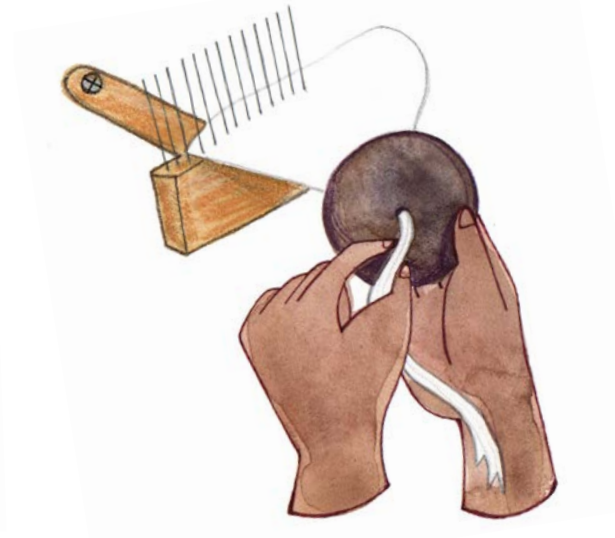


Figure 4
When the left hand has pinched the fiber from side to side and pulled the fiber forward, the right hand moves the diz back into the fiber.

draw the fiber toward you about half a staple length, then using the left hand, slide the diz toward the comb along the drawn-out section of fiber (Figure 3), pinch the fiber with the left hand side to side, draw the fiber toward you, slide the diz toward the comb with the right hand (Figure 4). Repeat to create a continuous sliver. (Reverse right and left hand if you prefer.)

Step 6 Planking

To plank, take the continuous length of fiber and break it into three or four shorter lengths. I lay them out side by side, lashing their butt ends onto my wool hackle, but you can also just lay them on a table surface. Then using a light grip, bunch the planked sliver together (Figure 5) and lash the butt end onto the stationary comb through all the rows of tines if you have more than two. With the fiber lashed on once again, give it a few light strokes to tidy the fiber mass into a triangular shape.

Step 7 Final Dizzing

The final attenuation is through a diz with a smaller orifice. During this final dizzing, I strive to pull off the various fiber lengths together. To this end, I ensure the diz is not pushed so far into the fiber on the comb that the orifice becomes overly filled. Too much fiber in the diz can result in your pulling the longest fibers off first.

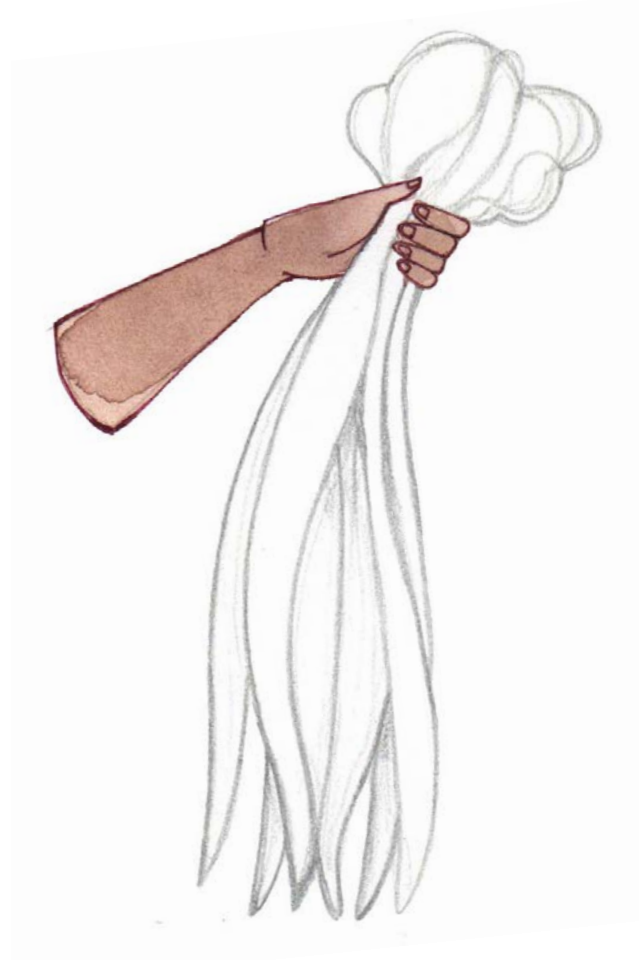


Figure 5
The planked fiber is ready to lash onto the stationary comb again.

Step 8 Final Step: Roving or Top

Peter Teal discusses two options for what happens to the combed fibers next: top or roving. He describes winding several combed slivers together into a bundle called a top for storage or inserting light twist into the sliver to create a spinning preparation he called a roving.

Turning Sliver into Roving

First decide if you want to spin the fiber from the tip end or the butt end. In my experience, spinning from the tip end assists in spinning a finer yarn because the scales that make up the wool fiber's cuticle catch onto one another more readily. Spinning from the butt end gives me the smoothest singles possible and preserves the fiber's luster.

Photo by Matt Graves

Sliver with a light twist is wound onto a knitting needle to create roving.

The sliver is turned into roving by slightly attenuating the fiber while adding a light twist and loading the roving onto a "spindle" of some sort. This can be a spindle from a great wheel, a knitting needle, or a distaff. The direction of twist added should be opposite to the planned singles spinning twist.

If you wish to spin from the tip end of the staple, start loading the spindle with the butt end, or vice versa. This places the end that you want to spin from on the outside of the fiber bundle. The spindle, now loaded with combed fiber ready for spinning, can simply rest in your lap as you begin spinning.

MINDFUL WOOL COMBING

One of the greatest benefits of combing your own fiber is a deeper understanding of the fiber at hand. Every decision made, including choice of fiber, breed, fiber-preparation method, draft, ply twist, and yarn finishing, affects the characteristics of the final yarn. As you work, be ever-present, mindful, and attentive. It is the melding of your observations and your intuition that reveal what the fiber is capable of before you actually sit down to spin.

Resources

Barker, Aldred F., and E. Priestley. *Wool Carding and Combing*. London: Cassell and Company, 1912.

Fannin, Allen. *Handspinning: Art and Technique*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1970.

Teal, Peter. *Hand Woolcombing and Spinning: A Guide to Worsteds from the Spinning-Wheel*. Poole, England: Blandford Press, 1976.

Kim McKenna says her journey is a delicate balance between science and art. Her research helps her to understand the intrinsic nature of the material, and practice helps to improve upon the mechanics of skill. However, she sees a point where the mind must be turned off and her hands and intuition be allowed to guide her. Kim shares her passion and journey at www.claddaghfibrearts.com, on Instagram as @claddaghfibrearts, and in lectures and workshops (including online).

The teeth on a burnishing brush point away from the handle so you can use it while fiber is added.

Photos courtesy of Long Thread Media unless otherwise noted

For Better Blending, Accessorize!

BY EMILY WOHLSCHEID

Drumcarders can open so many possibilities for making custom batts and fiber blends! In addition to what comes in the box, you can use a range of accessories with your drumcarder. But what are all those tools for? Slight variations, such as the direction of teeth on a brush, can completely change a tool's purpose, and two tools may perform the same task but appear completely different. Most carding accessories fall into three main categories: prep, packing, and cleaning.

PREP

Tools for fiber preparation are rarely included with a drumcarder as standard accessories because they are such great stand-alone tools. All work to open fibers with a bit of carding cloth on a wood base clamped to your work surface. These tools can take the place of a flicker brush (such as the ones from Fancy Kitty and Strauch). Some makers take this one step further by attaching the cloth to a curved top surface, as Clemes & Clemes did with the Lock Pop. When I have some stubborn fibers or want a very smooth blend, I use these types of tools.

PACKING

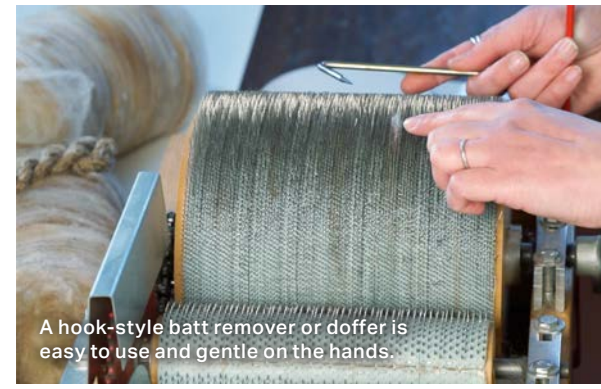
A packing brush is a gentle packing tool. It can come attached to the carder or as a separate tool, and it typically has nylon bristles. The placement of an attached packing brush can be a matter of personal preference. If it is placed over the main drum, as on some models by Fancy Kitty, Strauch, or Brother, it doesn't leave as much of the drum exposed, but it can be flipped up or removed. Packing brushes placed

closer to the licker-in (like the Ashford attachment) or even on the back of the carder (like Majacraft's Fusion Engine or the finishing brush from Classic Carder) leave more of the main drum open for painting fibers and easier batt removal, and they seem easier to adjust and keep in place. Clemes & Clemes offers a handheld packing brush, so you can use it freely and apply pressure by hand instead of adjusting it on the carder.

A burnishing brush has metal teeth that point upward, away from the handle. The teeth tend to be fine and are usually longer and more flexible than those found on a doffing brush or carding cloth. A burnishing brush packs fibers tighter than a packing brush for bigger, fluffier batts. This is my preferred packing method, and I use it frequently between fiber additions. Strauch, Fancy Kitty, and Clemes & Clemes all have great options for these.

CLEANING

While prep and packing tools aren't essential to drumcarding, cleaning tools most certainly are if you want to properly maintain your carder. The first step in cleaning your drumcarder is to remove the batt you have just carded. At the seam of the main drum, you will separate the fibers a bit at a time with a specialized tool before pulling your batt off the drum. The tool for this job goes by many names and comes in several different forms. Cleaning brushes are also referred to as doffer brushes, so you may hear the terms doffer stick, doffer pin (Louët), doffer hook (Fancy Kitty), and no-bend doffer (Clemes & Clemes). Awl (Ashford), Knuckle-Saving Batt Pick (Strauch), and



A hook-style batt remover or doffer is easy to use and gentle on the hands.

picker tool (Majacraft) are several other names and styles that serve this purpose. If you try a few of these, you may find that you prefer one over another. (For me, the hook style is the most ergonomic and easy to use.) Classic Carder offers the most unusual drum-cleaning tool: naturally shed porcupine quills, which slip between the teeth without deforming them.

Doffer brushes generally have metal teeth similar to those on carding cloth in length and structure. The teeth point downward toward the handle of the brush and are used to remove any remaining fibers after carding. Depending on the carder, the same brush may be used to clean both the licker-in and the main drum.

Whenever you want to add accessories to your carder, there are à la carte options for obtaining the tools you most covet from a variety of makers.

Emily Wohlscheid is the fiber and jewelry artist behind Bricolage Studios. She works out of a cooperative studio in west Michigan and teaches online and in person around the country. Learn more at http://bricolagestudios.bigcartel.com.

To see these tools in action, check out Emily's new online course *Drumcarding Basics & Beyond* at http://learn.longthreadmedia.com.

Clamp the Clemes & Clemes Lock Pop to the table near the licker-in to open up fleece just before carding.

Photo by Matt Graves

Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted

Cut and Sew Handspun Jersey

BY MICKI HAIR

When I began sewing clothing for myself, I was eager to use handspun, handwoven fabrics. As a knitter, I was experienced with garment construction, but I found this didn't really prepare me for working with woven cloth. Sewing darts, inserting zippers, and dealing with fraying edges can make sewing a challenge instead of a creative and fun way to spend an afternoon. Sewing with commercial knitted fabrics, however, produced pleasing results almost effortlessly. I found myself wishing I could make my own knitted fabrics using handspun yarn . . . and then it occurred to me that I could! I had worked with a knitting machine in the past to make sweaters, but I never thought about looking at it like a loom—a maker of *fabric*.

In the past, I machine knitted the pieces of a sweater, and after blocking and steaming, I would handstitch them together. I just picked up the stitches for the neckband or cardigan front by hand to finish the sweater. But now I wanted to knit yardage—nothing elaborate, just a nice jersey-style knit.

SPINNING FOR JERSEY

I did the spinning on my original Ashford e-spinner. Since my knitting machine is of the standard-gauge variety, the yarns needed to be finer than the worsted-weight yarns I usually spin for handknitting. I love e-spinning and am so excited to see the machines rise in popularity. The large bobbins on my e-spinner make it easy to produce nice big center-pull balls for the knitting machine. All of the yarns for this project were about the same size: the singles measured 30 to 35 wraps per inch (wpi), and the two-ply yarns wrapped at 23 to 26 per inch, producing fingering- to sportweight yarns.

What Is Jersey?

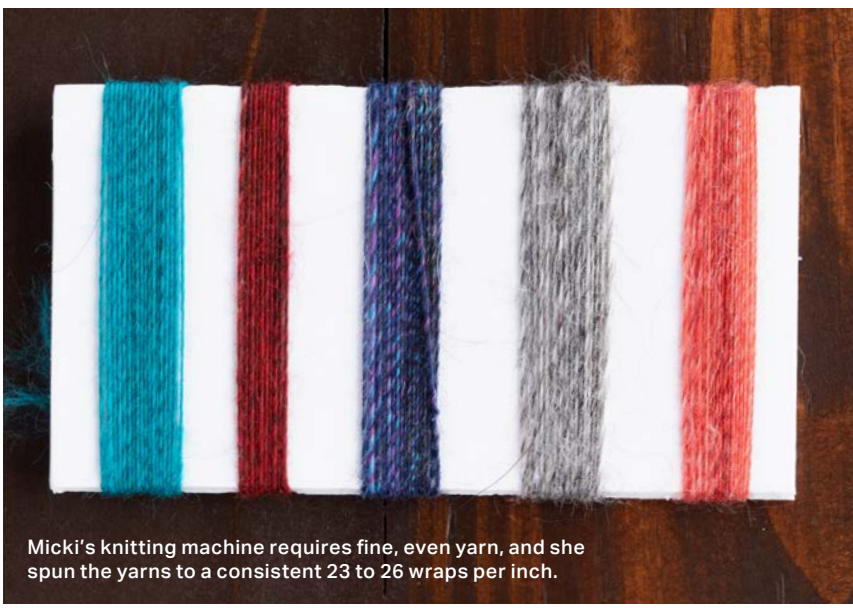
1. A plain knit fabric [stockinette stitch] . . . originally made of wool, jersey fabric first was manufactured on the island of Jersey, in the Channel Islands off the English coast, and used for fishermen's clothing.

2. Loosely defined term used to refer to any knitted fabric without a distinct rib.

3. A fine, choice wool combed from the rest of the wool.

4. A very fine woolen yarn.

—Fairchild's Dictionary of Textiles, 7th Edition



Micki's knitting machine requires fine, even yarn, and she spun the yarns to a consistent 23 to 26 wraps per inch.

PLANNING & KNITTING

Before the knitting could begin, I needed to select my pattern to determine how much fabric would be needed. I chose the Ruched-T pattern by Angela Wolf, a great multisize pattern with multiple options. Having made this top using commercial fabric, I had already traced the pattern pieces onto Swedish tracing paper, so they were ready to go. When I measured the front and back of the pattern, I decided to knit squares of fabric, which would be easier to handle than yardage.

Next, I needed to test the knitting gauge and the amount of shrinkage that would result from the fulling process I had in mind. Using my handspun and knitting machine, I knit a 4" × 4" swatch. After measuring the stitches per inch, I calculated the number of stitches needed to make the fabric 20 percent wider than the pattern piece—a guess at the estimated shrinkage that would occur during finishing. I knitted a second swatch, wet-finished the fabric, and allowed it to dry. I compared the measurements of before and after and actually had less shrinkage than expected widthwise, so I was able to cut down the number of stitches that I needed.

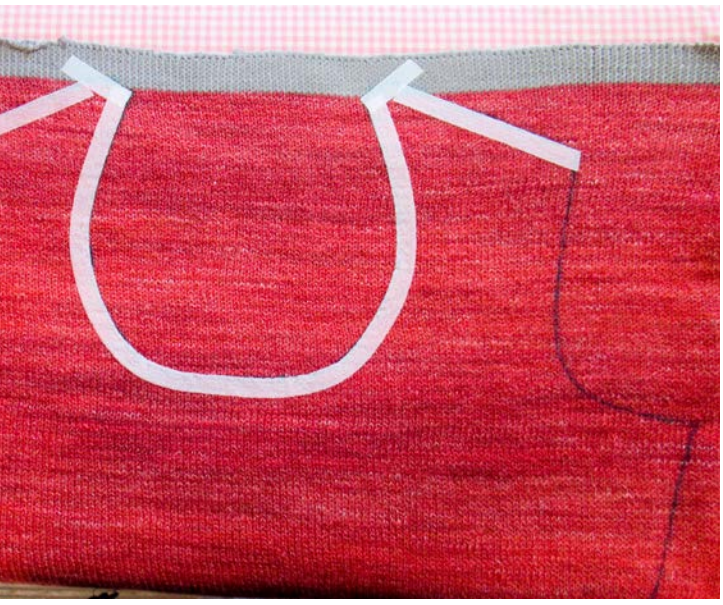
After accounting for loss due to shrinkage, I knew how wide to make the pieces. Length would be determined by the amount of yarn that was in each center-pull ball. I kept the tension at a minimum and had my dial set to the highest setting. (The carriage dial controls stitches per inch. The higher the number, the larger the stitch.) The knitting was quick and easy since I didn't do any hand manipulations, and in no time, I had six large squares of fabric as well as an extra piece for one set of short sleeves.

I finished the squares like fabric, not like a sweater, so there was no pinning, blocking, steaming, or weaving in of ends. I wanted the fabric to full like woven yardage would, so I handwashed the pieces in very warm water and gave them a little healthy agitation. After leaving them to sit for about 20 minutes, I put them through the spin cycle like the swatch while I preheated the dryer on extra low with a towel inside. Timidly, I put one square in the dryer and set the timer for 8 minutes. When the buzzer went off, the piece was perfect—soft, light, and elastic! I finished the other pieces the same way and then placed them on the heated mat to complete any drying that was necessary.

A few specialty sewing notions helped make the project a success.

Keeping both the yarn tension and stitch-gauge tension loose, moving the carriage back and forth reveals the purl side.

Photos by Micki Hair



After tracing the pattern piece onto the fabric, Micki fused stay tape to the cutting lines. The gray yarn is waste yarn used to cast the fabric on and bind off of the knitting machine.

Photos by Micki Hair

Once the hem tape is applied to the bottom edge, the fabric will be ready for cutting.

CUTTING & SEWING

When the fabric was ready, I laid the pieces out on the cutting table, and the first thing I noticed was the shrinkage in the length of almost 30 percent. The width shrinkage was minimal, generally less than 10 percent. My pattern pieces fit on the squares but did not allow the extra material needed for the ruching, which was fine because the weight and drape of my fabric would have created unnecessary bulk if ruched. I found that using the fabric as reverse stockinette, with the purl side out, created the texture I was looking for. The Winter Gradient was the only square not big enough, but when the pattern piece was turned sideways, it fit perfectly. I was able to use a curled selvedge as a finish for the bottom hem.

For the cutting, I used the method taught by Olgalyn Jolly in her *How to Cut & Sew a Sweater* online class, tracing the pattern pieces directly onto the fabric before stabilizing the edges. Making sure my center line was on grain, I marked around the entire pattern. One piece of the Merino/bamboo gradient was a little longer than the other, so I used it for the front, making a longer, tapered finish for the hem. After tracing, I heated the iron and, using a pressing cloth, gently pressed the ½-inch fusible knitted stay tape onto the wrong side around the perimeter of each piece. I used 1-inch double-sided fusible stay tape for the hems, pressing it along the bottom edge and leaving the paper backing in place. Slowly and carefully, I cut out the pieces using a rotary cutter.

For the sewing, I used both a four-thread serger and a regular sewing machine outfitted with a walking foot and a bobbin filled with stretch thread. I sewed the pieces together using the serger, with only a few minor adjustments made to the stitch length and differential feed to move my fabric through quicker, resulting in a flat unruffled seam. Using ½-inch seams, the stitches fell just inside the stay tape. Opting for a clean finish on the neckline and armholes, I turned back the ½-inch stay tape and basted the edge in place before topstitching with the sewing machine. Finally, I peeled away the paper backing on the hem stay tape, making it easy to turn up the edge and steam it in place before the final stitching. Once that was complete, the shoulder and side seams were steamed and lightly pressed with a tailor's clapper.

I loved turning my handspun jersey into handspun fashion, and I can't wait to try this technique on other garments!

Top #1: Vertical Stripe

The front of the vertical-stripe sweater is made from the Luxe Winter Gradient fiber pack from Paradise Fibers. A fiber-of-the-month club offering, it contained four different tops totaling 8 ounces. This beautiful blend of 18.5-micron Merino, dehaired cashmere, baby alpaca, and mulberry silk was a pleasure to spin. I split each color in half and spun one color after the other onto two bobbins, which I plied together. This was the heaviest of the yarns, with the finished skein measuring 562 yards and 1,124 yards per pound (ypp).

For the back, I used another blended top from Paradise Fibers, this one consisting of Merino, alpaca, and silk in the color Licorice. Spun in the same manner and grist as the gradient, the finished skein contained 600 yards. I dyed it a dark blue-green using Greener Shades dyes.

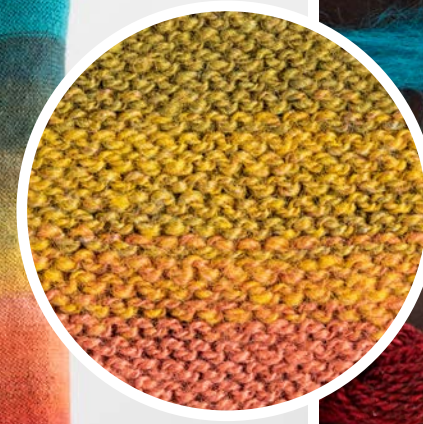
Close-up of the fabric for the vertical-stripe top.

Vertical-stripe top.

This project started with a beautiful pile of combed tops.

Top, the darkest roving from the Luxe Winter Gradient Pack spun into a dark, heathered yarn; the Licorice colorway, at bottom, was heathered gray after spinning and before dyeing with Greener Shades dye.

Merino/bamboo gradient top.



Close-up of the fabric for the Merino/bamboo gradient top.

The 26 colors of the Merino/bamboo gradient blended and ready for spinning.

Photo by Micki Hair

A Merino/bamboo blend in the colorway Malachite was one of the first colors in the gradient top.

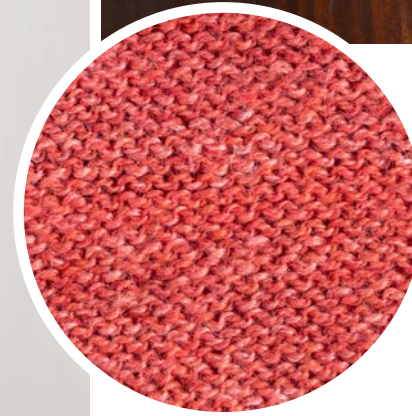
Hackle-blended Merino and bamboo.

Top #2: Merino/Bamboo Gradient

The Merino/bamboo gradient started with two samples of bamboo in the colors Malachite and Espresso, which came tucked into another fiber-of-the-month club box from Paradise Fibers. I love these colors together and decided to combine them with a small box of dyed bamboo in several different colors that I had purchased at the Southeastern Animal Fiber Fair. On that same trip, I also purchased several Merino fiber packs containing ½-ounce pieces of top in shades of red, orange, green, and blue. After selecting which colors I wanted to use, I split the amounts of each in half and blended the fibers on a hackle, dizzing off each color into a small piece of top. Altogether, I had 26 beautiful colors, and I spun them end to end onto two bobbins to make a two-ply yarn. I let the colors fall where they may during the plying to help blend the color changes. Each skein weighed just over 5 ounces and contained 690 yards at about 1,800 yards per pound.

Coral Merino/pineapple top.

A new fiber blend for Micki, a Merino/pineapple blend.



Close-up of the fabric for the coral Merino/pineapple top.

Top #3: Merino/Pineapple

I had never spun pineapple before, so I was excited to work with the Merino/pineapple blend. It arrived as another fiber-of-the-month club selection from Paradise Fibers in my favorite color, coral. When spinning was complete, I again had two large skeins, each around 7 ounces and containing 865 yards at 1,950 yards per pound. I finished the skeins by washing them in very warm water, then putting them through the spin cycle of the washing machine. They were laid flat to dry on a heated plant-propagation mat, which I find dries the yarns to a beautiful bouncy finish just perfect for knitting.

Resources

Greener Shades Dyes, www.greenershades.com

Jolly, Olgalyn. ***How to Cut and Sew a Sweater.*** http://workshop.ojolly.net

Paradise Fibers, Fiber of the Month Club, www.paradisefibers.com

Ruched-T Top #AW1123, www.angelawolfpatterns.com

Tortora, Phyllis G., and Robert S. Merkel. ***Fairchild's Dictionary of Textiles.*** 7th ed. New York: Fairchild Publications, 2009.

Wolf, Angela. ***Essential Guide to Sewing Knit Tops***. www.academy.angelawolf.com

Micki Hair lives in the beautiful state of South Carolina. When not spinning, knitting, or sewing, she enjoys spending time with her husband and pup on their pedal-powered pontoon fishing boat, *The NautiKnitter*.

Stay *in* the *Spin*

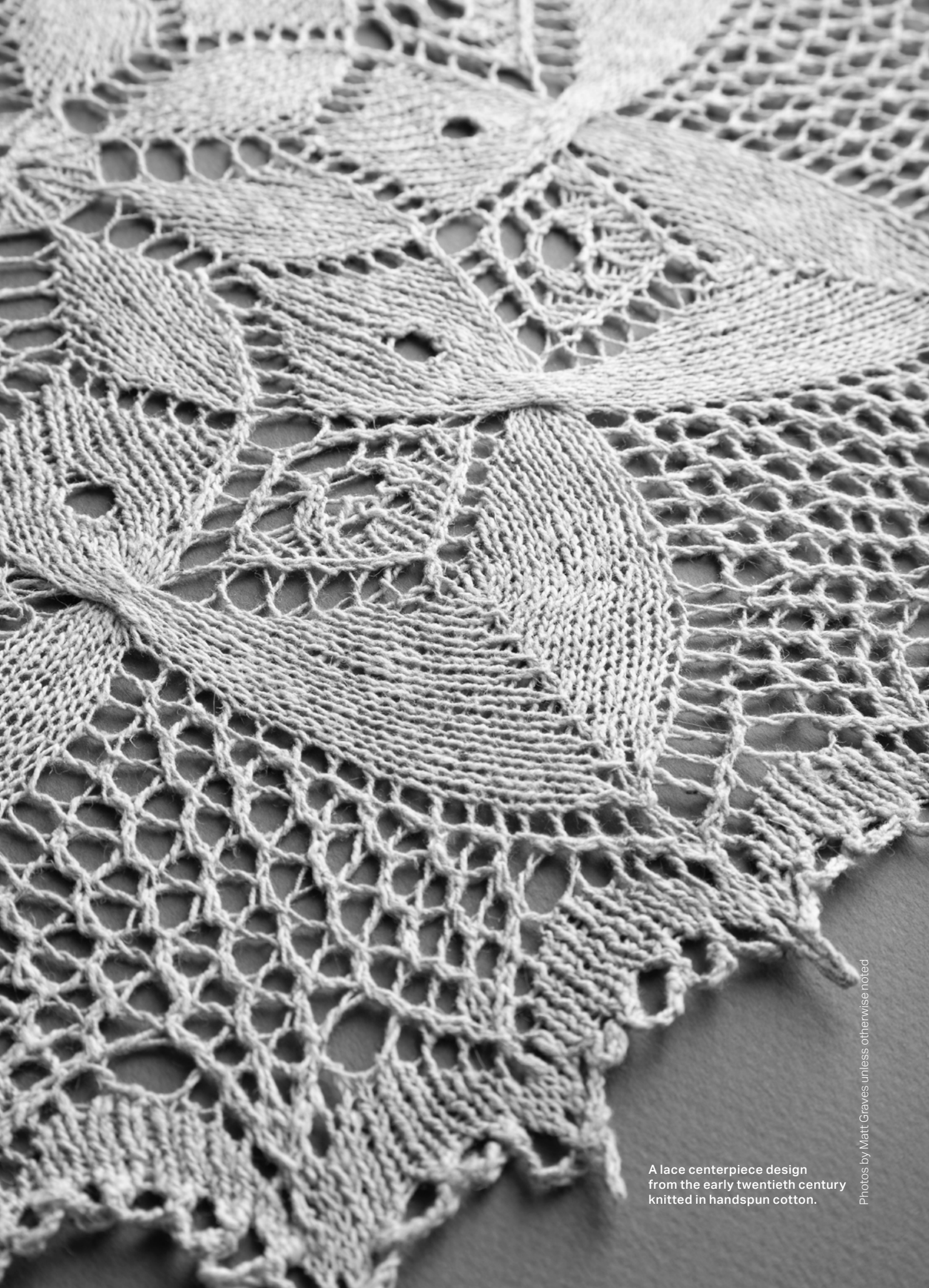
JUST ADDED!
Streaming access to the complete Long Thread Media video catalog (80+ videos)

Get an **ALL ACCESS** subscription to ***Spin Off*** Magazine

- Unlimited access to 25+ video workshops
- Access to newly released workshops
- A full year of print issues
- A full year of digital PDF issues
- Subscriber only premium articles
- Unlimited access to previous issues through iOS & Android apps
- ***Just added!*** Streaming access to the complete Long Thread Media video catalog (80+ videos)

long thread
MEDIA

Visit spinoffmagazine.com/subscription to subscribe



A lace centerpiece design from the early twentieth century knitted in handspun cotton.

Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted

Clematis Lace

HANDSPUN VERSION BY MELVENEA HODGES
ORIGINAL PATTERN BY CHRISTINE DUCHROW | PATTERN ADAPTATION BY CHARLENE SCHURCH

It's only a matter of time before new spinners attempt to spin fine yarns. And cotton enthusiasts like me are constantly inspired by the endless possibilities of cotton in the textiles around us. Not long after I began spinning cotton, I found an unusual cotton sliver at a fiber festival and wondered, "Could I—should I—try to spin this luxurious fiber into a fine thread?"

I had been searching for natural-color cotton at the festival when I found a small quantity of recycled denim sliver. The fine, short-stapled fiber was a blend of various hues of light indigo with tiny flecks of navy throughout. I loved its painterly effect; a special yarn would come from this fiber.

SPINNING NOTES

Wanting to create as much yardage as possible from the small 1-ounce bag of fiber, I set out to spin my finest cotton yarn ever. My tool of choice was a supported spindle for maximum control. I carefully hovered over every inch of long-draw singles to smooth even the tiniest slubs. I spun the singles with a lot of twist and pressed the loft out of the fiber as I went, creating a smooth yarn with a defined surface.

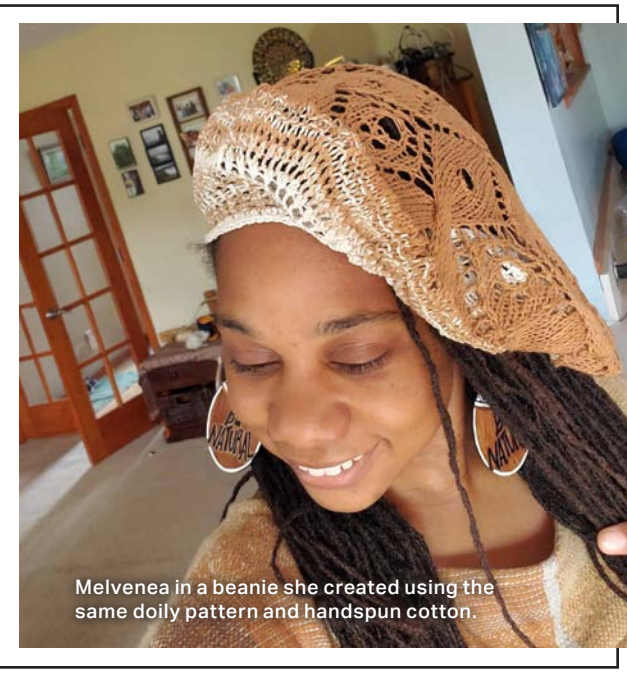
After spinning the singles, I used my Kromski Sonata spinning wheel set on a 14:1 ratio to create a two-ply yarn, letting the twist build up until the yarn felt firm. The resulting yardage was dense, durable, and round like crochet cotton.

Initially, I was tempted to pack the 300 yards of cotton laceweight away like countless other precious handspun skeins; I couldn't do that with this one. The yarn was so unique and rare that I had to see it worked up right away. At first, I thought I'd crochet some snowflake ornaments but decided the yarn's handspun allure would get masked in the compact intertwinement of crochet stitches. I really wanted to make something larger that would showcase this fine yarn; knitted lace was my answer.

Doilies?

Before the summer of 2010, it had never occurred to me that I would ever need or want a doily. I grew up with printed disposable napkins and tablecloths. Fancy handmade table linens—especially doilies—were not used for our special occasions. After painstakingly spinning my first skein of cotton laceweight, I finally understood why doilies were once popular to knit. They allow you to knit exquisite, complex lace using up small quantities of yarn, which means they are also perfect for showcasing cotton handspun. Doilies are to a handspinner what canvas is to a painter.

This project caused me to reflect upon and acknowledge my connection with the countless fiber artists before me. Our lives may be vastly different, yet we knit doilies for the same reason; we love to create and admire fiber art.



Melvenea in a beanie she created using the same doily pattern and handspun cotton.

Photo courtesy of Melvenea Hodges

Photo courtesy of Melvenea Hodges

Sizing handspun cotton.

SIZING HANDSPUN COTTON

When I want to create a crisp, structured fabric, such as in fine, knitted-lace doilies, I turn to sizing. Sizing involves coating your yarn or finished textile with a filler or glaze, and it is used for different reasons by weavers, knitters, crocheters, lacemakers, and seamstresses.

For my project, I wanted to stiffen the cotton yarn so the lace pattern would remain sharp and visible. A coated yarn will also resist abrasion and therefore last longer. Another reason you may want to use sizing on knitted handspun cotton is to help prevent permanent staining. In my experience, soil adheres to the sizing instead of penetrating deeper into the fiber.

Sizing the yarn before working a knitted project is usually not necessary. However, I have found it useful when knitting very fine, loose lace with all rows patterned. The yarn will be smoother and stiffer, holding the pattern and allowing repeated frogging in the unfortunate event that something goes awry.

For cotton intended for knitted lace, I like a sizing solution made with cornstarch. Dissolve ¼ cup (59 ml) of cornstarch into ½ cup (118 ml) of cold water. Stir the mixture into about 4 cups (0.95 L) of boiling water. Allow the solution to cool. The consistency and appearance at this point should be like clear laundry detergent. You can adjust the viscosity of the solution by adding water. Do you want to create a drapey yet crisp hand? Add more water to dilute. Are you making objects such as knitted ornaments that need to be fairly inflexible? Use the solution at full strength.

Submersion Method

When working with yarn, place your skein or knitted textile into the starch solution, allowing it to become fully submerged. Squeeze the solution through the fibers to make sure it fully penetrates. Remove the skein or textile and wring out excess liquid. If sizing yarn, snap the skein to remove any tangles or kinks and then pull it into shape. Hang the skein to dry where it can get good airflow. Rotate the skein and separate the threads frequently as it dries. For drying knitted lace, stretch and pin the piece into shape on a blocking mat, form, or frame.

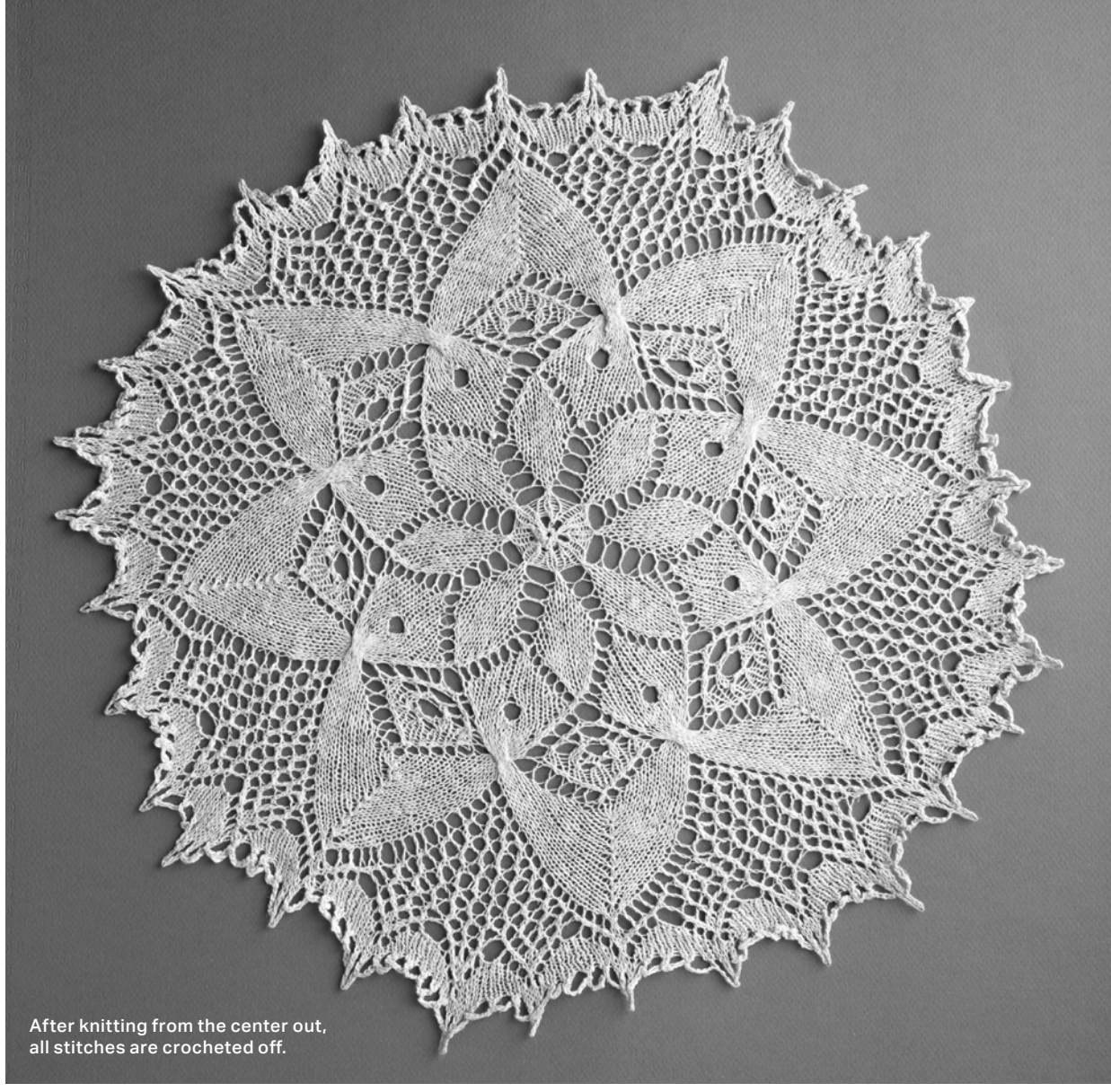
Spray Method

You can also size completed knits by applying a diluted starch solution with a spray bottle. First, wet the textile with water and make sure excess liquid is squeezed out. Next, spray the piece with the diluted starch solution, pin it into shape, and let it dry. This method tends not to last as long before needing to refresh the starch, however it is effective for a light hold for perhaps a lacy summer shawl. You can refresh your knitted cotton lace in a pinch by misting it with the diluted starch mixture and lightly pressing it with an iron. It will compress the yarn a little, but this technique will keep cotton wearables nice and airy with less wrinkling and shrinkage.

FINISHING

After spinning for this project, I washed the yarn in warm water before knitting. After knitting the doily and weaving in ends, I submerged it in a diluted starch solution and squeezed out the excess. Then, I stretched and pinned it into shape on a blocking mat and allowed it to dry.

This pattern was previously published in *Knitting Traditions*, Spring 2010 as A Christine Duchrow Lace Centerpiece with a companion article about Duchrow's art pattern knitting. To learn more about this early twentieth-century designer and her groundbreaking use of knitting charts, visit www.spinoffmagazine.com.



After knitting from the center out, all stitches are crocheted off.

MATERIALS

Fiber ⅞ ounce (25 g) recycled denim cotton sliver.
Yarn 300 yd (274 m) 2-ply; 2,100 ypp; 34 wpi; laceweight.
Needles Size 1 (2.25 mm) set of 5 double-pointed needles.
Notions Cable needle; crochet hook size B (2.25 mm); stitch markers; T-pins, blocking mat, and cornstarch for blocking.
Finished Size about 15½" in diameter depending on blocking.

INSTRUCTIONS

CO 8 sts and divide onto 3 needles. Taking care not to twist sts, join them into a circle and k 1 rnd. Work rnds 1 through 80 of the chart (see the chart notes for even-numbered rnds). After the first 8 rnds, redistribute the sts onto 4 needles with a m between reps for the rem of the work. Work all double yarnovers as 2 sts (k1, p1) on the subsequent even-numbered rnd unless otherwise noted.

FINISHING

Crochet off: *Insert the crochet hook into the next 2 sts on the left-hand needle as if knitting them tog through the back of the sts (Figure 1). With the sts still on the needle, make a sc (Figure 2), slipping the sts off the needle when the sc is completed. Ch 7. Rep from * around until all the sts have been used.

Crocheting Off

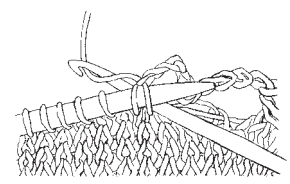


Figure 1

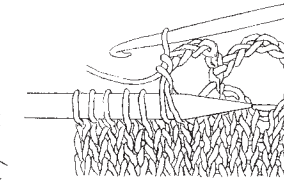
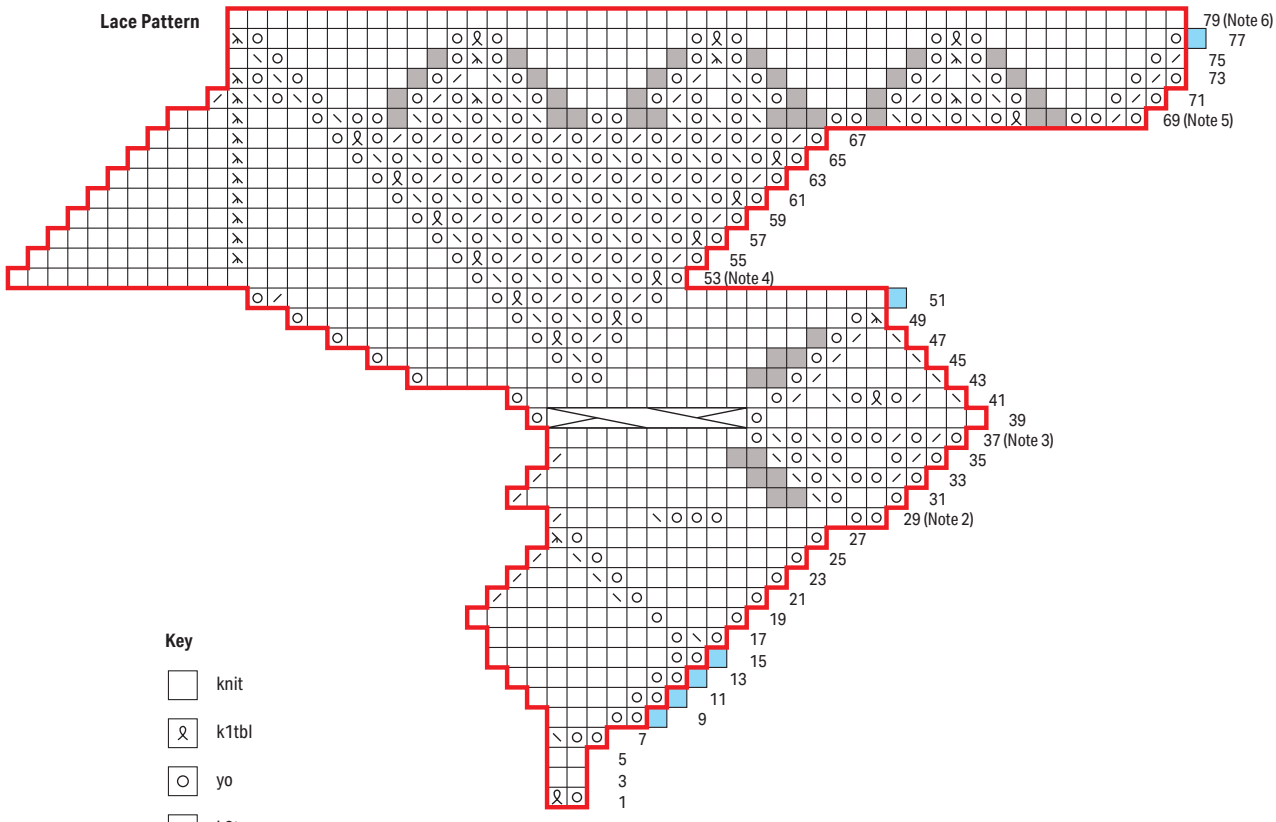


Figure 2



Pattern Chart Notes

Note 1: The chart shows only odd-numbered rnds.

Knit all even-numbered rnds, working [k1, p1] into each double yo of the previous rnd, unless otherwise noted.

Note 2: In Rnd 30, work [p1, k1, p1, k1] into triple yo of Rnd 29.

Note 3: In Rnd 38, work [p1, k1, p1] into triple yo of Rnd 37.

Note 4: In Rnd 53, remove marker, knit the first 11 sts onto end of previous rnd, replace marker. Continue to end of rnd, working the 11 moved sts as the last sts of the rnd.

Note 5: In Rnd 70, work [p1, k1, p1] into each double yo of Rnd 69.

Note 6: After Rnd 79, knit Rnd 80.

Ch 7, then sc into beg sc. Fasten off and darn in any loose ends.

Handwash the finished piece in warm water and mild soap, and then rinse thoroughly.

Create a diluted starch solution by mixing ¼ cup (59 ml) of cornstarch into ½ cup (118 ml) of cold water. Stir the mixture into about 6 cups (1.4 L) of boiling water. Allow the solution to cool.

Submerge knitting, squeezing starch solution into the fibers, and then squeeze out excess liquid. Stretch and pin into shape on a blocking mat as follows: Pin the intervening crocheted lps into a series of arches between the petals. Adjust the pins as you work to achieve even spacing and a smooth outline. When the centerpiece is completely dry, remove the pins. ●

Melvenea Hodges is a fiber artist born and raised in Benton Harbor, Michigan. She is committed to practicing traditional textile techniques in honor and expression of her heritage as an American maker. She intermittently blogs about her latest creations and fiber adventures at www.traditionsincloth.com.

Sun-dried Indigo at Living Blue in Bangladesh.

Photos courtesy of Living Blue

Blue Revival

BY KEITH RECKER

The following is excerpted with permission from True Colors: World Masters of Natural Dyes and Pigments, *published by Thrums Books, 2020. For more information, see page 66. —Editor*

Nilpharmari, ***a word coined by*** the British for the growing of *Indigofera tinctoria,* means "the cultivation of blue." Bangladeshi social enterprise Living Blue farms gorgeous indigo whose aesthetic worth is matched by the community assets it creates on the way from farm fields to an international marketplace thirsty for authenticity and high quality.

The history of indigo cultivation on the subcontinent goes back many millennia to the Bronze Age Indus Valley civilization of Mohenjo Daro, where archaeologists have found evidence of indigo dyes. Starting in 1777, when Britain no longer had access to the slave plantations of the United States as a source of indigo, indigo crops from what was known as East Bengal became incredibly valuable for

export. A vicious system of high-interest loans luring farmers into purchasing necessary farming supplies created an inescapable cycle of debt, poverty, terrible working conditions, and exhaustion of farmland. This combination created the Indigo Revolt of 1859–1860, viewed by some as the first nonviolent protest on the subcontinent's long road to independence. Nonviolence notwithstanding, reprisals from local and colonial authorities were brutal.

Shortly afterward, synthetic dyes swept the globe, and indigo cultivation at any scale disappeared in what is now Bangladesh because of the lack of economic reward as well as the lingering memory of abhorrent conditions and labor practices. Just over ten years ago, however, indigo regained a foothold here. "Living Blue restarted indigo dye production in 2006, and ever since, we have grown by leaps and bounds. Living Blue is currently the only producer of *Indigofera tinctoria* and the leading practitioner of true Bengal natural indigo dye in Bangladesh," says Mishael Aziz Ahmad, CEO of Living Blue and instrumental in its founding.

The farm-to-textile process at Living Blue is entirely local. Starting with high-quality homegrown seeds planted in late February or early March to take advantage of rain-soaked soil, mature plants are harvested by small, independent growers. Chopped and loaded into large tanks within two hours of harvest, plant material macerates in warm water for several days. The sludge that settles at the bottom is then shifted to oxidation tanks, where, mixed with water, it is circulated through pipes and sprinkler heads and stirred with bamboo sticks to maintain oxygenation. The sludge is again left to settle, excess water is drained off, and the beautiful blue indigo slurry at the bottom of the tanks is boiled in small batches to remove moisture. The resulting thick slurry is strained and spread out in shallow trays to dry in the sun. Flakes of dried pigment, known as indigo lake, are ground into fine powder ready to place in a fermentation vat.

Living Blue reserves about 300 kilos of indigo pigment a year for its own dyeing production and sells over a ton to other dyers and sellers of fine dyestuffs globally.

Masud Rana, Soptomi Rani, and Mohammad Enamul, members of the Living Blue dyeing team.

BEAUTIFUL BLUES

Indigo is more than a natural dyestuff. *Indigofera tinctoria,* a legume that enriches the soil with nitrogen, is used in crop rotation with grains and vegetables. The plants do not require anything other than monsoon rains to flourish, making indigo a fairly undemanding crop as well.

After the harvesting of the leaves, stems provide fuel for cooking fires at home. Even post-fermentation/post-dyeing effluent is released into the fields as a substitute for man-made nitrogen fertilizers.

CHANGING LIVES

Living Blue is co-owned by CARE Social Ventures (CSV), an affiliate of the global nonprofit organization CARE International, and by Nijera Cottage and Village Industries (NCVI), which represents 3,000 local farmers and more than 200 artisans and dyers. "The management team consists mostly of people from the community. All proceeds from the business go back to the community, for their welfare and for expansion of the business," says Mishael. "Many of our artisans who have been with the company for several years now have saved and bought lands, constructed homes,

An example of Living Blue's *kheta-kume* style, which blends *kheta (kantha)* stitching and the *mokume* effect of shibori pleat dyeing.

sent children to school, and are having a decent and dignified life."

Living Blue artisans can apply for zero-interest loans, receive maternity and health benefits, and are paid punctually every month. The organization also conducts regular free health camps for artisans and their family members. These services are important in the Rangpur area of Bangladesh, which is mostly rural and remote.

Living Blue artisan Sona Rani Roy is a master quilter from Dinajpur. One of her white-on-white quilts was selected as one of twenty-six finalists out of 3,951 applicants for the Loewe Craft Prize 2017. Sona's involvement with Living Blue has changed her life:

White running stitch on indigo shibori.

"I had no work, and my husband had little income back in 2006. One day I came to know people from CARE Bangladesh who were visiting our villages. I expressed my interest in being associated with them. Then I was given training as a 'natural leader,' and later on, training in quilting skills. I could always quilt, which I learned from my mother and grandmother, but never before put it to commercial use. I had no idea I possessed a great skill. Now I am a cluster leader of some thirty artisans. With the newfound income, I slowly built my dream, which is my family. I bought lands, reconstructed our house, sent my kids to school."

GLOBAL REACH

Both ethics and truly sublime artisan skills are integral to Living Blue's successful entry into the global marketplace. Running-stitch techniques, known as *kantha* in this part of the world, come into play, of course. But other techniques are also layered into Living Blue textiles. Japanese *shibori* techniques (where tie-dye patterns are formed by stitching and

The indigo goes into deep tanks for maceration until sediment forms. The resultant sludge is boiled in small batches.

Boiled indigo is spread out to dry in shallow trays. Flakes of pigment form (see page 62), and are ground into a fine powder. The slaked pigment is added to fermentation vats.

A length of fabric folded and stitched for shibori dyeing.

A dip in the indigo vat.

Shiuli Rani, Living Blue team member.

gathering fabric prior to dyeing) are deployed to make undulating, wave-like patterns called *mokume* (a Japanese term, borrowed from metalwork, referring to a wood-grain-like texture), which are prized for their supple graphic movement. Kantha stitching joins layers of sheer cotton mokume with an old sewing technique called *dheu,* a gently gathered running stitch whose rolling puckers also resemble the movement of water. The combination of mokume and dheu on indigo is surreally beautiful, like deep blue streams running through your hands.

Living Blue works with designers and buyers from a dozen countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, North America, and Australia, with some of the world's most prestigious brands among them. Mishael explains that their global business is quite diverse. "There are retailers who buy our collection and retail it under the Living Blue label. There are design houses who collaborate with Living Blue by providing their design and patterns, which we make for them. Many of these buyers are repeat customers who look for and appreciate high-quality craftsmanship. We have gained their confidence."

The fact that this confidence extends all the way from farmer, dyer, and embroiderer to the rest of the world makes the blues of Living Blue altogether unique.

Load this handspun bag with spinning goodies, drop it over your shoulder, and hit the road. *From left:* combed top from Jakira Farms, spindle from Greensleeves Spindles, and combed top from The Homestead Hobbyist (see Resources.)

Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted

Crocheted Peddler's Pack

BY KATRINA KING

As a spinner who started at the lace end of the spectrum from the very beginning, I've always been drawn to luxury fibers and spinning as fine as possible. My crafting life is based on tiny yarns and threads: crochet, tatting, cross-stitch, weaving, and more. This project gave me the opportunity to explore a hardier fiber than the Merino/silk and yak/silk blends that I indulge in, and it challenged me to spin a heavier gauge than usual.

When I decided to make a crocheted bag to take to fiber festivals, I knew I needed a strong, durable fiber. This pattern is based on a market bag that my aunt sewed for me many years ago that still travels with me to various fiber festivals and gets filled with the goodies I find.

SPINNING NOTES

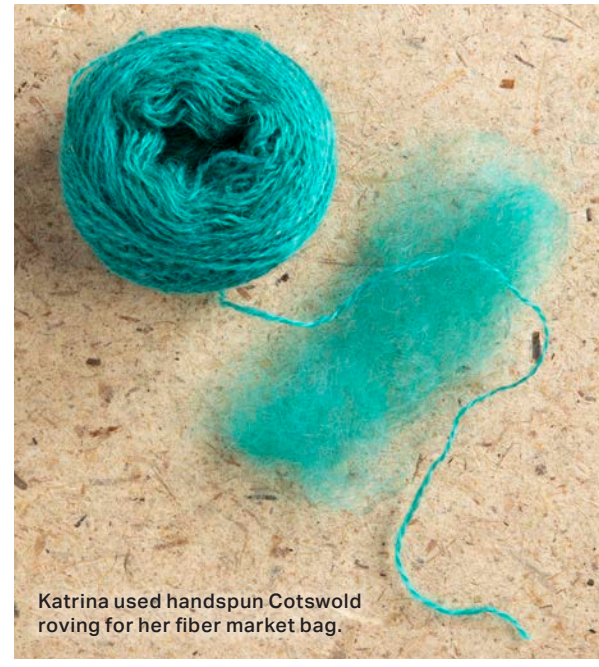
Cotswold is a luster longwool breed that is currently identified by the Livestock Conservancy as having a threatened status in the United States. When I started spinning the prepared roving from Phoenix Farm Fiber, I was surprised at how well it gripped to itself and the slight creamy feel that it still had after dyeing and processing. The strength of the fiber was unlike anything I'd ever worked with before, and I had to cut it with scissors rather than break it by hand after applying twist.

For this carded roving, I had to pay more attention to my spinning than I'm accustomed to with commercial combed tops in order to keep my singles consistent. With luxury fiber blends, I draft the fibers down as far as possible to create fine, gossamer handspun. However, I wanted to spin this Cotswold into a sportweight yarn, and it gave me an excellent lesson in feeling my desired yarn diameter with my fingertips as I drafted and spun the fibers.

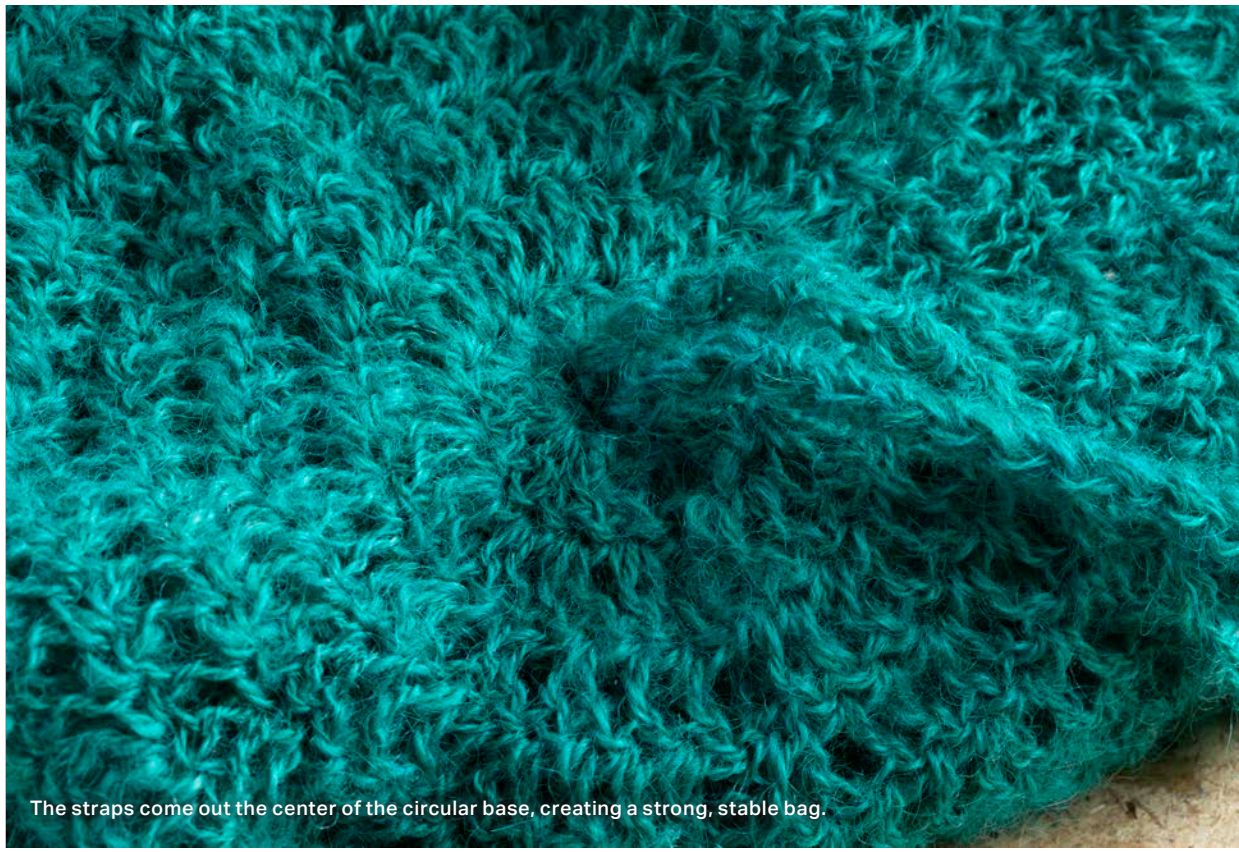
I found that some predrafting loosened the fibers and allowed them to slip past one another easily. After some sampling, the 16:1 ratio (medium whorl) on my 24-inch Schacht Reeves wheel provided the ideal singles twist, and I increased the speed with a 19:1 ratio for creating a two-ply yarn.

MATERIALS

Fiber Phoenix Farm Fiber Cotswold wool roving, 8 oz (227 g) in teal.
Yarn 2-ply; 650 yd; 1,546 ypp; 18 wpi; sportweight.
Hook F/5 (3.75 mm). Adjust hook size if necessary to obtain the correct gauge.
Notions Tapestry needle.
Gauge 24 sts and 10 rnds = 4" in body mesh patt.
Finished size 24" circumference and 20" tall mesh body to drawstring rnd.



Katrina used handspun Cotswold roving for her fiber market bag.



The straps come out the center of the circular base, creating a strong, stable bag.

Visit **www.spinoffmagazine.com/spin-off-abbreviations** for terms you don't know.

BAG

Ch 6, sl st in 1st ch to form ring.

Rnd 1 Ch 3 (counts as dc throughout), 17 dc in ring, sl st in top of beg ch to join—18 sts.

Rnd 2 Ch 3, dc in same st, 2 dc in each rem st around, sl st in top of beg ch to join—36 sts.

Rnd 3 Ch 3, dc in same st, dc in next 2 sts, [2 dc in next st, dc in next 2 sts] 11 times, sl st in top of beg ch to join—48 sts.

Rnd 4 Ch 3, dc in same st, dc in next 3 sts, [2 dc in next st, dc in next 3 sts] 11 times, sl st in top of beg ch to join—60 sts.

Rnd 5 Ch 3, dc in same st, dc in next 4 sts, [2 dc in next st, dc in next 4 sts] 11 times, sl st in top of beg ch to join—72 sts.

Rnd 6 Ch 3, dc in same st, dc in next 5 sts, [2 dc in next st, dc in next 5 sts] 11 times, sl st in top of beg ch to join—84 sts.

Rnd 7 Ch 3, dc in same st, dc in next 6 sts, [2 dc in next st, dc in next 6 sts] 11 times, sl st in top of beg ch to join—96 sts.

Rnd 8 Ch 3, dc in same st, dc in next 7 sts, [2 dc in next st, dc in next 7 sts] 11 times, sl st in top of beg ch to join—108 sts.

Rnd 9 Ch 3, dc in same st, dc in next 8 sts, [2 dc in next st, dc in next 8 sts] 11 times, sl st in top of beg ch to join—120 sts.

Rnd 10 Ch 3, dc in same st, dc in next 9 sts, [2 dc in next st, dc in next 9 sts] 11 times, sl st in top of beg ch to join—132 sts.

Rnd 11 Ch 3, dc in same st, dc in next 10 sts, [2 dc in next st, dc in next 10 sts] 11 times, sl st in top of beg ch to join—144 sts.

Rnd 12 Ch 3, dc in each st around, sl st in top of beg ch to join.

Beg body mesh pattern

Rnd 13 Ch 4 (counts as dc, ch 1), [sk next st, dc in next st, ch 1] around, sl st in 3rd ch of beg ch—72 dc, 72 ch-1 sps.

Rnd 14 Ch 4 (counts as dc, ch 1), sk first ch-1 sp, [dc in next ch-1 sp, ch 1] around, sl st in 3rd ch of beg ch.

Rnds 15 through 62 Rep Rnd 14.

Rnd 63 Ch 1, sc in same st, sc in 1st ch-1 sp, [sc in next st, sc in next ch-1 sp] around, sl st in beg sc to join—144 sc.

Rnd 64 (Drawstring Round) Ch 4 (counts as 1st tr), tr in each rem st around, sl st in top of beg ch to join—144 tr.

Rnd 65 Ch 1, sc in same st, sc in each rem st around, sl st in beg ch to join—144 sc.

Rnd 66 Rep Rnd 13.

Rnds 67 and 68 Rep Rnd 14.

Rnd 69 Ch 1, reverse sc in each st around, sl st in beg ch to join. Fasten off.

DRAWSTRING

Make a Romanian crochet cord 85" long (see below).

FINISHING

Beg at end of round, weave cord through tr rnd. Even out cord ends and insert them through hole of beg ring to inside of bag. Adjust drawstring to desired length and tie cord ends tog with an overhand knot. Sew knot on WS to beg rnd. Weave in ends.

Resources

Elwell, Bart. "Ioana Bodrojan's Romanian Point Lace." *PieceWork* January/February 2001, 43–44.

Greensleeves Spindles, www.greensleevesspindles.com

The Homestead Hobbyist, www.thehomesteadhobbyist.com

Jakira Farms, www.jakirafarms.etsy.com

Pheonix Farm Fiber, www.phoenixfarmfiber.etsy.com

Katrina King has yet to meet a fiber craft she doesn't like. Her crafting tool bag includes spinning, crochet, knitting, weaving, tatting, cross-stitch, and just about anything else that can be done with tiny thread. You can follow her craft adventures at www.threadeddreamstudio.com.

What Is Romanian Cord?

Romanian cord, also called Romanian braid, can be used for straps, edgings, or ties. A regular crochet chain will stretch and grow thinner over time, but the Romanian cord technique creates a stronger, more stable cord to use for a drawstring. This firm, somewhat flat construction can feel awkward to create at first but is a fast and useful technique when you get the hang of it.

Romanian cord or braid is also used to form the base of Romanian point lace. In ***PieceWork***, January/February 2001, author Bart Elwell shares more.

"In Romanian point lace, a three-dimensional braid outlines the pattern and forms a framework upon which needle-lace fillings and wrapped, twisted, or needle-woven bars are worked. This sturdy lace is traditionally worked in white or ecru. The braid itself has such a complex structure and consistent quality that it appears to be machine made; it is actually crocheted. The origins of Romanian point lace are unknown, but it is thought to have been developed in central Europe in the eighteenth century, and eventually spread to Romania."

Visit **www.spinoffmagazine.com** for a step-by-step tutorial.

Romanian cord

Photo by Kate Larson

Note: Turn cord in the same direction as if flipping a page in a book.

Row 1 Ch 2, sc in 2nd ch from hook, turn.

Row 2 Sc in horizontal bar at end of row (cord edge), turn.

Row 3 Sc in 2 horizontal bars at end of row (cord edge), turn.

Rep Row 3 for patt until cord measures desired length, fasten off.

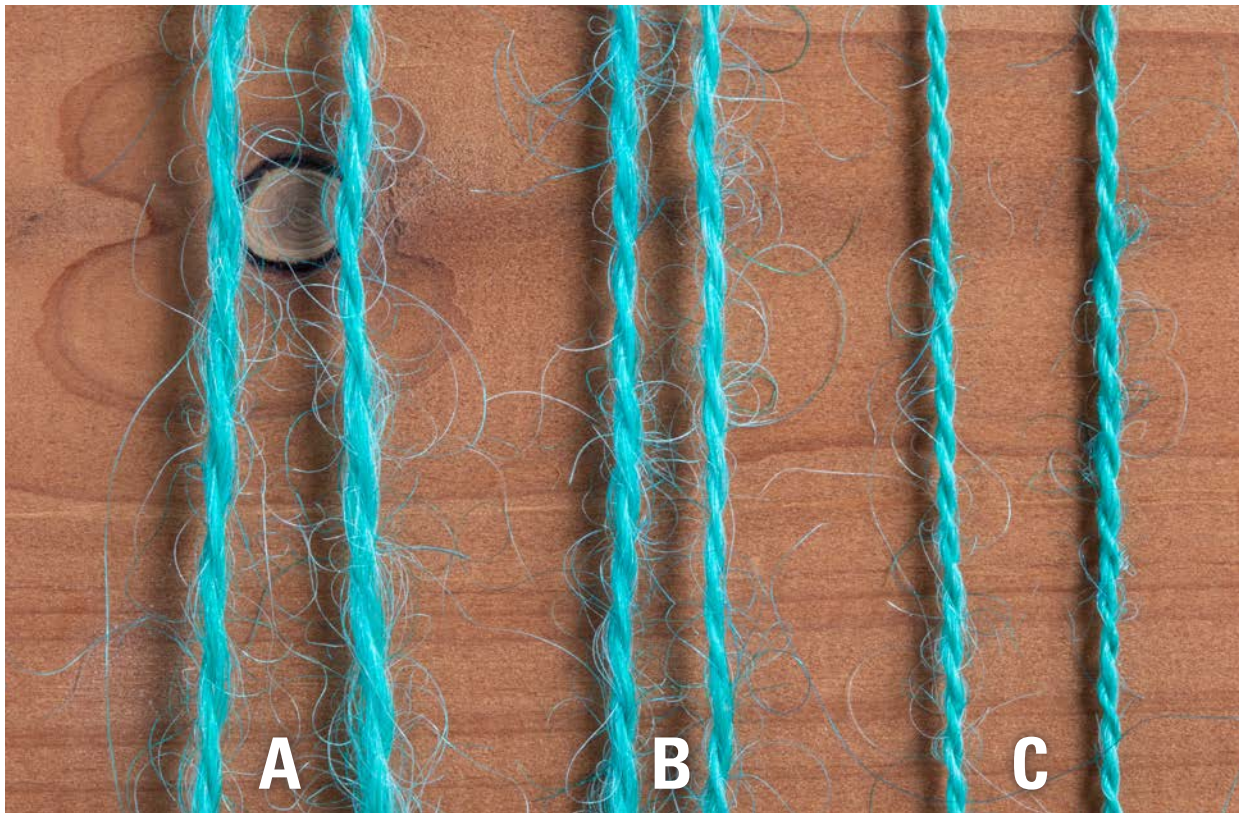


Photo by Matt Graves

Twist study in handspun Cotswold. *From left:* low-twist singles and low-twist ply; low-twist singles and medium-twist ply; high-twist singles and high-twist ply.

Spinning Strong Wools

BY KATE LARSON

From Cotswold to Karakul, fleeces on the coarse end of the wool-grading scale tend to grow in bold curls or waves. This character allows us to spin a wide range of useful yarns. Preparation, drafting technique, and twist all dramatically impact the yarns we create.

You might find in your spinning practice that strong wools change more dramatically than finewools with small differences in twist. A little extra twist will change a lofty, haloed knitting yarn into a firm, indestructible warp yarn. As a passionate strong-wool spinner, I like to spread the word that these wools can be spun into an impressive range of yarns, but it took me years of studying their reaction to twist to get the full range I wanted.

Using Cotswold roving from Phoenix Farm and a short-forward (worsted) draw, I created three very different yarns simply by adjusting twist. **Yarn A** is low twist in both the singles and ply steps, and it is supple and lightweight. This fragile, high-luster yarn is great for weft-faced weaving. **Yarn B** is a low-twist singles plied with medium twist. This is a wonderful knitting yarn. **Yarn C** is high twist in both singles and ply. This yarn is tough and resilient. Use it for reliable warps, swoon-worthy sewing thread, and crocheted bags (see page 68).

Kate Larson is the editor of *Spin Off* and spends as many hours as life allows in the barn with her beloved flock of Border Leicesters.

| Learn more at **www.spinoffmagazine.com**.

Access the education you've trusted for 40 years and the inspiration that keeps you creating now.

Get every issue of *Handwoven*, *Spin Off*, and *PieceWork*, as well as 100+ crafting videos for as little as $10 per month.

follow the long thread

Visit **longthreadmedia.com** to subscribe today.

long thread
MEDIA

Mini Mill & Spinner
A Custom Collaboration

BY SHARON BARNES

John and Sara Morris of HLA Fiber Mill in Kansas. Photos by Sharon Barnes

Most handspinners find some or all of the steps involved in processing fiber by hand deeply satisfying. Turning a pile of raw wool into clean carded rolags or combed tops can be a treat. However, it isn't always possible to process our fleeces, and sometimes, we would just rather skip some of those steps and get right to spinning.

Luckily for us, industrially processed fiber from animals we've never met is not the only option. The terms mini mills or artisan mills refer to small- to medium-scale fiber processors. These mills often offer custom processing and do the same things that a hand processor does, but on a larger scale in both volume and speed. Small fiber mills can be found across North America; some have been in business for over a century, while others are starting up with brand-new machines and choosing the equipment needed for their individual purposes.

MY LOCAL MINI MILL

HLA Fiber Mill (named for the owners' farm, Hidden Lane Alpacas) is a mini mill near Augusta, Kansas, that processes customer orders. John and Sara Morris started the mill in 2015 shortly before retiring from their full-time careers, building on their experience in raising and showing alpacas. They knew fiber, knew the community, and were looking for an adventure that utilized their skills.

John's mechanical experience is key to maintaining the mill machinery, and he has also become the master of the spinning frame located in the mill. Sara specializes in working with clients and taking their raw fiber through washing, picking, dehairing (if needed), carding, and drafting to prepare it for spinning. It is a true cottage industry, located in a small house a stone's throw from their home. Their equipment is powerful and impressive, but the process is still very hands-on. Each step along the way, the fiber is handled, weighed, and assessed to make sure it fills the requirements of that specific order.

I first met John and Sara Morris when their mill equipment was installed. Later, John and Sara

graciously welcomed my guild for a visit. As I toured the mill (leaving with an armload of beautiful alpaca yarn), I started planning a collaborative project. I could have a fleece washed at the mill, dye it at home myself, and then bring it back to the mill for carding. That way, I could do the steps I enjoy the most for this particular project, and let the mill do the heavy lifting. This is the story of a half-and-half project: a handspinner and a mill owner partnering and making choices to balance efficiency with enjoyment.

STARTING THE PROJECT

While discussing the idea of a custom blend of dyed wool and alpaca, Sara told me that she happened to have some wool on hand, so we met at the mill to select the fiber. I envisioned a heathery blend, and when she showed me some gorgeous gray Bluefaced Leicester, I fell hard. This was the first shearing from #1911, a twin ewe lamb from Caryn Miller's flock near Smithville, Missouri. I added white from one of Caryn's rams, which had a longer staple length. This variety of natural grays and white would be an easy way to produce different shades, and a deep blue or blue-green would go well with natural black alpaca from John and Sara's Princess.

Sharon chose three luscious fibers to blend: white and gray Bluefaced Leicester and black alpaca.

Washing at the Mill

Sara uses a nonagitating washing machine with an automatic dispenser for fiber-friendly detergent, but first, she does a low-tech cold-water rinse to remove an astonishing amount of dirt. The rinsed fiber is then loaded evenly in the three compartments of the washer for a 30-minute cycle. The clean fiber is usually spread out on racks to dry under fans in the airing cupboard, but that day, the wet wool came home with me for dyeing.

Dyeing at Home

I chose Lanaset turquoise dye and used plenty of it for a very deep shade. I set up my "dye studio"—a butane camp stove on the back patio—and followed the manufacturer's instructions using vinegar, dyeing the gray and white wool in the same pot for an easy range of colors. This made for a low-stress, high-satisfaction dyepot! When the fiber was dark enough, the dyepot had not exhausted, so I threw in some additional white Bluefaced Leicester, which came out a gorgeous sky blue.

Picking and Carding at the Mill

Back at the mill a couple of days later, I weighed the dyed wool—now fully dried. Math ensued. Sara and I measured enough alpaca to make up 20 percent of the total by weight, and then I sorted the dyed locks into piles of dark, medium, and bright colors. I now had four colors, which were divided into six equally proportioned groups for processing. Next, the fiber would go through the picker to begin the opening and blending process. This step involved separating the locks by hand and layering each color evenly on the infeed belt. As a newbie, I spent a long time here but got a little faster with each batch. The picker looks like a coarse drumcarder on the front with another drum of nail-like spikes behind that, with a blower that spits the fiber out into a small, clean room. Some of the fine Bluefaced Leicester curls made it through the

first picking run intact, and the colors were still visibly separate, so all the fiber was raked and rolled up for a second picker run.

We weighed the picked fiber into three-ounce batches and headed to the carder. Each batch was spread on the carder's infeed belt. The goal was to create a consistent layer between blue lines marked on the belt so that a steady amount of fiber would enter the carder throughout the process.

Sara checked the settings on the carder and flipped the switch. Soon, fiber started rolling out the back of the carder in a beautiful dark heathery-blue roving. It was

The mill has a high-efficiency washer that can keep three batches of fiber separate per wash.

Sharon's low-stress, high-satisfaction dyepot.

Sharon organized her piles of all four fibers so they would be blended by the picker.

Roving exiting the carder.

Tips for Working with a Mill on Custom Projects

- **Be selective.** You may want to reserve very special fleeces for processing at home by hand, but consider how much fiber you have and how long it will take to wash and card it all. Also consider shipping and processing costs when deciding what fiber will give you a good return on your investment.
- **Learn about the mill.** Most mills have websites describing their services and your options, and you should carefully read any documentation they provide. Are there minimum weights? Does your fiber need extra steps, such as dehairing for cashmere or llama?
- **Contact the mill.** Let the mill operators know your plans and agree on which processes you need. If the mill is within driving distance, see about scheduling to drop off your fiber in person. You'll not only save shipping costs but you may get a mill tour as a bonus! Also keep in mind that most mills will have orders ahead of you; ask about turnaround time and be prepared to wait several months.

After one pass through the picker, some locks were still intact.

- **Prepare your fiber.** Pricing is often based on incoming weight, so at least skirt your fleece before sending it to the mill. Also consider putting your fleece in a cold-water soak to get rid of some of the fleece contaminants—dirt is heavy! And always make sure your fiber is absolutely dry before packing and shipping.

smooth and very airy—quite different from dense commercially combed tops. We could have taken it on through the draw frame for pin drafting, but I decided to stop at this point since the additional attenuation wasn't necessary for this handspun project.

Although my day was done at the mill, Sara was left with the task of cleaning her equipment so the next job would not be contaminated with my fiber.

Spinning at Home

After admiring and petting the roving we had created, it was time to get on with spinning! I sampled several different options, including a very lofty two-ply yarn, and DK-weight two- and three-ply yarns. They were all beautiful, so I needed to choose the one that would best fit the project that was forming in my mind all along: a knitted hood with a cable running down long scarf ends. I decided to go with the three-ply yarn, and as the singles accumulated on my bobbin, I knew I was on the right track.

See how Sharon's dreamy Cloister Hood project developed on page 78.

Resources

HLA Fiber Mill, www.hlafibermill.com

Sharon Barnes works in library technology in Kansas, and her life is enriched by fiber and history. She enjoys and teaches fiber prep, but is always up for a new experience. She raises rabbits (no, not Angoras) and has a thing for Italian greyhounds. She is an active member of the Wichita Weavers, Spinners & Dyers Guild, for whom she teaches and manages the website.

Stay toasty this winter in a handspun hood!

Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted

Handspun Cloister Hood

BY SHARON BARNES

This generously sized hood has a rustic elegance and brings to mind visions of shadowy figures pacing along a covered walkway. The cable that runs to the ends of the scarf-like tippets looks impressive but is actually simple to knit. A naturally rolling edge provides soft structure around the wearer's face and a little extra insulation. The tassel adds a touch of fairy-tale feel, but also has a practical purpose—its weight helps the point of the hood to drape properly.

The idea for this project was hatched during our local guild's tour of a nearby mini mill, where I asked owner Sara Morris about custom carding several small batches of fiber. I thought this might be a fun activity for guild members but realized there would be some logistics to iron out.

The owners had recently returned from vending at an event and opened their trailer for a spur-of-the-moment shopping opportunity. I was completely unable to resist some natural-color Bluefaced Leicester fleece and then had to add a couple of skeins of soft and drapey millspun alpaca. I had been thinking about knitting a warm hood as a winter head covering, and the alpaca yarn filled the bill perfectly! The design began to take shape in my mind on the drive home, and I couldn't wait to start translating it into fiber.

While working on the prototype hood, I kept thinking about custom blending colors and fibers and contacted Sara to see if we could give it a test run. In the end, I selected gray lamb and white Bluefaced Leicester fleeces from Sara's stock, both of which I dyed a deep turquoise, and added black alpaca from her herd. The process included carefully weighing and dividing the colors and adding enough black alpaca to make up 20 percent of the total weight for a little extra softness and warmth. We ran the fiber through the picker twice and then through the carder. The result was a light and lofty roving, well-blended to produce a dark and complex heathered yarn.

SPINNING NOTES

I sampled a few drafting and grist options and settled on a three-ply yarn because it was rounder and denser than the two-ply sample, showing off the cable stitch beautifully. Its density would help block winter winds, but the woolen spin would keep it bouncy and warm.

I spun the fiber using a woolen long draw (throwing in a bit of double drafting for fun) with my wheel set up for double drive at a 14:1 ratio. The Z-twist singles measured 32 wraps per inch (wpi) and plied up in a firm 11 wpi three-ply with a 30-degree twist angle. The 455 yards were pretty consistent at an average 695 yards per pound. The fresh mill-produced roving drafted smoothly, and never having been packed, shipped, or stored, needed no predrafting or fluffing.

MATERIALS

Fiber 10 oz custom-carded roving blend of 80% Bluefaced Leicester/20% alpaca.
Yarn 3-ply; 455 yd; 695 ypp; 11 wpi; DK weight.
Needles Size 7 (4.5 mm). Adjust needle size if necessary to obtain the correct gauge.
Notions Markers (m); cable needle (cn); smooth waste yarn for provisional CO; tapestry needle.
Gauge 17 sts and 25 rows = 4" in St st.
Finished Size 17½" from front to back at top edge, 38½" from top to end of tippet.

Visit **www.spinoffmagazine.com/spin-off-abbreviations** for terms you don't know.

Notes

- This hood is cast on at the top and worked down the left side, then stitches are picked up along

From left: Bluefaced Leicester, dyed Bluefaced Leicester, alpaca roving, and completed blend.

Sharon tried several variations before settling on a three-ply, DK-weight yarn. From left: low-twist two-ply, two-ply, and three-ply yarns.

The two-ply swatch on the left didn't show as much stitch definition as the three-ply sample on the right.

the cast-on edge and worked down the right side, attaching along the back as you go.

- Any provisional cast-on method may be used for the additional stitches at the cast-on and when beginning the seed-stitch neck border.

HOOD

Left Side

CO 74 sts, then, using waste yarn and a provisional method (see Notes), CO 6 more sts—80 sts total.

Row 1 (RS) K6, place marker (pm), work Cable chart over 20 sts, pm, knit to end.

Row 2 (WS) K1, purl to m, sl m, work in patt to m, p6.

Row 3 K6, sl m, work in patt to m, knit to end.

Row 4 K1, purl to m, sl m, work in patt to m, p6.

Row 5 K6, sl m, work in patt to m, knit to last 2 sts, ssk—1 st dec'd.

Row 6 K1, purl to m, sl m, work in patt to m, p6.

Row 7 K6, sl m, work in patt to m, knit to end.

Row 8 K1, purl to m, sl m, work in patt to m, p6.

Rep Rows 5–8 until Rows 1–24 of chart have been worked 3 times, then work Row 5 once more (ending with Row 1 of chart)—62 sts rem; 35 sts for St st section (plus 1 garter st at end of RS rows); piece measures about 11¾" from CO, measured in center of St st section.

Neck Border

With RS facing, waste yarn, and using a provisional method, CO 10 sts onto left needle for border, [p1, k1] 5 times—72 sts total.

Next row (WS) [K1, p1] 4 times, k1, p2tog (last st of border and 1 st of left side), turn—1 st dec'd.

Next row (RS) [P1, k1] 5 times.

Rep last 2 rows 28 more times—43 sts rem; 7 sts for St st section.

Decrease Section

Set-up row (WS) [K1, p1] 4 times, k1, pm, p2tog, purl to m, sl m, work in patt (Row 2 of chart) to m, purl to end—42 sts rem: 6 sts for edging, 20 sts for chart, 7 sts for St st section, 9 sts for border.

Row 1 (RS) Knit to m, sl m, work in patt to m,

sl m, knit to 2 sts before m, p2tog, sl m, work in patt to end—1 St st dec'd.

Row 2 (WS) Work in patt to 2 sts before m, k2tog or p2tog as needed to maintain patt, sl m, purl to m, sl m, work in patt to m, purl to end—1 border st dec'd.

Row 3 (RS) K2tog, knit to m, sl m, work in patt to m, sl m, knit to 2 sts before m, p2tog, sl m, work in patt to end—1 edging st and 1 St st dec'd.

Row 4 (WS) Rep Row 2—1 border st dec'd.

Rep last 4 rows 2 more times—27 sts rem: 3 sts for edging, 20 sts for chart, 1 st for St st section, 3 sts for border; Row 14 of chart is complete.

Next row (RS) K3, sl m, work in patt to m, sl m, k2tog (removing m), work in patt to end—26 sts rem: 3 sts for edging, 20 sts for chart, 3 sts for border.

Next row (WS) Work even in patt.

Next row (RS) K2tog, k1, sl m, work in patt to m, sl m, p1, k2tog—24 sts rem: 2 sts for edging, 20 sts for chart, 2 sts for border.

Next row (WS) Work even in patt.

Next row (RS) K2, sl m, work in patt to m, sl m, p2tog—23 sts rem: 2 sts for edging, 20 sts for chart, 1 st for border.

Next row (WS) Work even in patt.

Next row (RS) K2tog, sl m, work in patt to 1 st before m, p2tog (removing m)—21 sts rem: 1 st for edging, 20 sts for chart.

Work 3 rows even in patt.

Next row (RS) K2tog (removing m), work in patt to end—20 chart sts rem; Row 1 of chart is complete.

Tippet

Cont in patt until there are 10 complete diamonds from CO, or to desired length, ending with Row 13 of chart—piece measures about 38½" from CO.

With WS facing, BO 2 sts, k2tog and BO 1 st, BO 3 sts, [k2tog and BO 1 st] 2 times, BO 3 sts, k2tog and BO 1 st, then BO all sts to end.

Right Side

With RS facing and beg at back point of hood, pick up and knit 74 sts along CO edge, then remove waste yarn from provisional CO and place 6 sts onto left needle, k6—80 sts total.

Row 2 (WS) P6, pm, work Row 2 of Cable chart over 20 sts, pm, purl to end.

Row 3 (RS) Knit to m, sl m, work in patt to m, k6.

Row 4 P6, sl m, work in patt to m, purl to last st, sl 1 pwise with yarn in back (wyb), fold hood along picked-up ridge with RS tog, with left needle, pick up purl bump from corresponding row of left side of hood, return sl st to left needle, k2tog tbl.

Row 5 K2tog, knit to m, sl m, work in patt to m, k6—1 st dec'd.

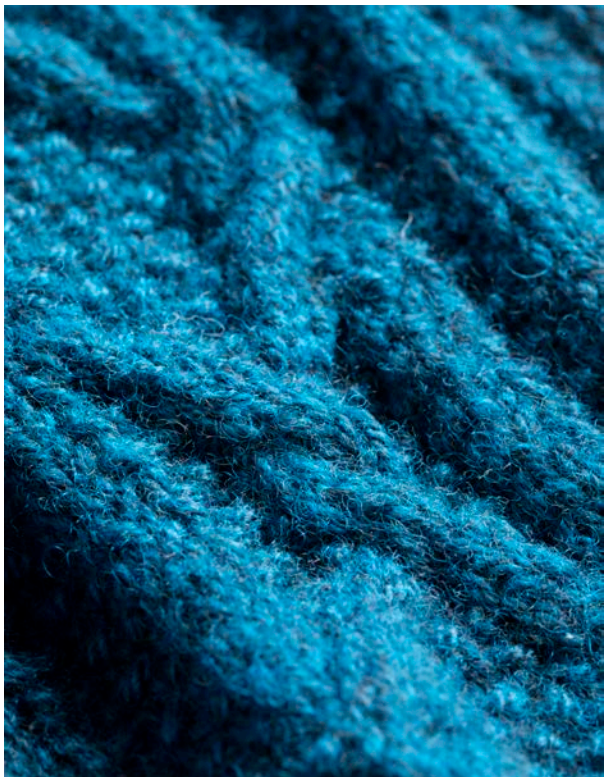
Row 6 P6, sl m, work in patt to m, purl to last st, sl 1 pwise wyb, fold hood along picked-up ridge with RS tog, with left needle, pick up purl bump from corresponding row of left side of hood, return sl st to left needle, k2tog tbl.

Row 7 Knit to m, sl m, work in patt to m, k6.

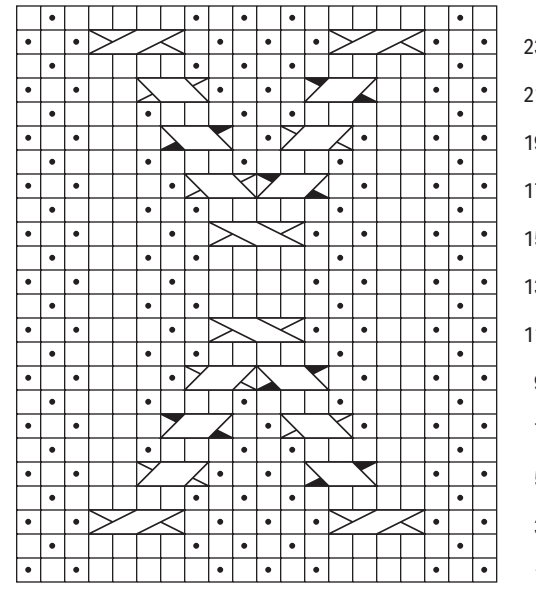
Rep Rows 4–7 until Rows 1–24 of chart have been worked 3 times, ending with Row 4 (Row 24 of chart)—63 sts rem; 36 sts for St st section (plus joining st at beg of RS rows).

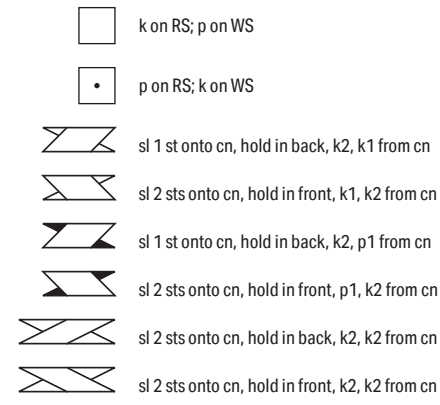
As Sharon worked on her prototype hood, she started planning the next one.

Photo by Sharon Barnes



Cable





Neck Border

With WS facing, remove provisional CO and place 10 sts onto left needle, [k1, p1] 5 times—73 sts total.

Next row (RS) [P1, k1] 4 times, p1, k2tog (last st of border and 1 st of right side), turn—1 st dec'd.

Next row (WS) *K1, p1; rep from * to end.

Rep last 2 rows 29 more times—43 sts rem; 7 sts for St st section.

Decrease Section

Set-up row (RS) [P1, k1] 4 times, p1, pm, k2tog, knit to m, sl m, work in patt (Row 1 of chart) to m, knit to end—42 sts rem: 9 sts for border, 7 sts for St st section, 20 sts for chart, 6 sts for edging.

Row 1 (WS) Purl to m, sl m, work in patt to m, sl m, purl to m, sl m, k2tog or p2tog as needed to maintain patt, work in patt to end—1 border st dec'd.

Row 2 (RS) Work in patt to m, sl m, k2tog, knit to m, sl m, work in patt to m, knit to end—1 St st dec'd.

Row 3 Rep Row 1—1 border st dec'd.

Row 4 Work in patt to m, sl m, k2tog, knit to m, sl m, work in patt to m, knit to last 2 sts, k2tog—1 St st and 1 edging st dec'd.

Rep last 4 rows 2 more times—27 sts rem: 3 sts for border, 1 st for St st section, 20 sts for chart, 3 sts for edging; Row 13 of chart is complete.

Next row (WS) Work even in patt.

Next row (RS) Work 2 sts in patt, k2tog (removing m), sl m, work in patt to m, knit to end—26 sts rem: 3 sts for border, 20 sts for chart, 3 sts for edging.

Next row (WS) Work even in patt.

Next row (RS) K2tog, p1, sl m, work in patt to m, k1, k2tog—24 sts rem: 2 sts for border, 20 sts for chart, 2 sts for edging.

Next row (WS) Work even in patt.

Next row (RS) P2tog, sl m, work in patt to m, k2—23 sts rem: 1 st for border, 20 sts for chart, 2 sts for edging.

Next row (WS) Work even in patt.

Next row (RS) K2tog (removing m), work in patt to m, k2tog—21 sts rem: 20 sts for chart, 1 st for edging.

Work 3 rows even in patt.

Next row (RS) Work in patt to 1 st before m, p2tog (removing m)—20 chart sts rem; Row 1 of chart is complete.

Tippet

Work cable chart to same length as left side, ending with Row 13 of chart.

With WS facing, BO 2 sts, k2tog and BO 1 st, BO 3 sts, [k2tog and BO 1 st] 2 times, BO 3 sts, k2tog and BO 1 st, then BO all sts to end.

FINISHING

Weave in ends. Block to measurements.

Tassel

Wrap yarn around a 5" piece of cardboard about 30 times. Cut a 12" piece of yarn and slip it under the strands at one edge. Tie loosely, slide tassel off cardboard and tighten the tie, then knot firmly. Cut all strands at other end of loop. Cut another 12" piece of yarn, then wrap and tie it firmly about ½" below top tie. For a full tassel head, flip tassel inside out so strands evenly cover original head. Keep 2 strands from center loose for attaching to hood, and use ends of original tie to wrap several times at base of tassel's head, then knot firmly. Use a crochet hook to bring the 2 loose strands through point of hood in two places and tie snugly. Do not cut off these ends; untie and remove tassel to wash hood.

Sharon Barnes learned to spin on a borrowed antique wheel, back when the only available resource she could find was one book, and (eventually) one brief session with an instructor, who pointed out the importance of the tension screw. She still has her first copy of *Spin Off* (purchased new in 1978) and will spin almost anything. She lives in Kansas, where sweeping vistas provide inspiration and winters guarantee sweater weather. Find her at www.prairiespinner.com, where she blogs occasionally, or on Ravelry as PrairieSpinner.

A thread can take you anywhere.

Using traditional and ground-breaking methods, the fiber artists featured in The Long Thread create expressive and utterly original cloth.

Discover their techniques and explore their inspirations.

Cocoons. Lotus fiber. Mulberry paper. Coffee filters. Embroidery floss. Silk cord. Crochet cotton. ***A thread can take you anywhere.***

Purchase your copy today!
Limited quantities available!

DON'T MISS OUT! Ships early September 2020.

Order yours at **lt.media/the-long-thread**

long thread
MEDIA

BREED ASSOCIATION

EQUIPMENT

FIBER

LITERATURE

LITERATURE

YARN

Advertiser Index

Spin Off

Retail Shop Directory

ARIZONA

Fiber Creek
Suite 123, 1046 Willow Creek Rd
Prescott, AZ 86301
(928) 717-1774
fibercreekprescott.com

Tempe Yarn & Fiber
1415 E University Dr
Tempe, AZ 85281
(480) 557-9166
tempeyarn.com

CALIFORNIA

Babetta's Yarn & Gifts
4400 San Juan Ave #20
Fair Oaks, CA 95628
(916) 965-6043
babettasyarnandgifts.com

Dharma Trading Co
1604 4th Street
San Rafael, CA 94901
(434) 456–1211
dharmatrading.com

Fengari
415 Main St
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
(650) 726-2550
fengari.net

The Altered Stitch
12443 W Magnolia Blvd
Valley Village, CA 91607
(818) 980-1234
thealteredstitch.com

COLORADO

Blazing Star Ranch
3424 S Broadway
Englewood, CO 80113
(303) 514-8780
blazingstarranch.com

Lambspun of CO
1101 E Lincoln Ave
Fort Collins, CO 80524
(800) 558-5262
lambspun.com

Knot Just Yarn, LLC
1250 S. Buckley Road
Unit H
Aurora, CO 80017
(303) 990-3310
knotjustyarnllc.com

Piney Creek Yarn
15422 E Orchard Rd
Centennial, CO 80016
(720) 596-4462
pineycreekyarn.com

Serendipity Yarn & Gifts
PO Box 5120
Buena Vista, CO 81211
(719) 395-3110
serendipityyarn.com

CONNECTICUT

Madison Wool
56 Wall St
Madison, CT 06443
(203) 245-5921
madwool.com

IDAHO

Yarn Underground
409 S Washington St
Moscow, ID 83843
(208) 882-7700
yarnunderground.com

ILLINOIS

Esther's Place
201 W. Galena St. (RT 30)
Big Rock, IL 60511
(630) 556-9665
esthersplacefibers.com

Fiber Universe
305 Southwest Water Street
Peoria, IL 61602
(309) 673-5659
thefiberuniverse.com

Fine Line Creative Arts Center
37W570 Bolcum Rd.
St Charles, IL 60175
(630) 584-9443
fineline.org

INDIANA

Spinnin Yarns
145 N Griffith Blvd
Griffith, IN 46319
(219) 924-7333
spinninyarns.com

Trading Post for FIber Arts
8833 S 50 West
Pendelton, IN 46064
(765) 778-3331
tradingpostfiber.com

KANSAS

Yarn Barn of Kansas
930 Massachusetts
Lawrence, KS 66044
(785) 842-4333
yarnbarn-ks.com

KENTUCKY

LSH Creations
1584 Wellesley Drive
Lexington, KY 40513
(859) 321-7831
lshcreations.com

The Woolery
Ste 1A, 859 E Main St
Frankfort, KY 40601
(800) 441-9665
woolery.com

MAINE

Belfast Fiber Arts
171 High St
Belfast, ME 04915
(207) 323-5248
belfastfiberarts.com

Halcyon Yarn
12 School St
Bath, ME 04530
(800) 341-0282
halcyonyarn.com

One Lupine
170 Park St
Bangor, ME 04401
(207) 992-4140
maineyarnandfibersupply.com

MARYLAND

Black Sheep Yarn Shop
9602 Deereco Rd.
Timonium, MD 21093
(410) 628-9276
blacksheepyarnshop.com

Cloverhill Yarn Shop
77 Mellor Ave
Catonsville, MD 21228
(410) 788 7262
cloverhillyarn.com

Lovelyarns
3610 Falls Rd
Baltimore, MD 21211
(410) 662-9276
lovelyarns.com

Vulcan's Rest Fibers
2728 Augustine Herman Hwy
Chesapeake City, MD 21915
(410) 885-2890
vulcansrest.com

MASSACHUSSETTS

The Fiber Loft
9 Massachusetts Ave
Harvard, MA 01451
(978) 456-8669
thefiberloft.com

WEBS - America's Yarn Store
75 Service Center Rd
Northhampton Rd., MA 01060
(800) 367-9327
yarn.com

MICHIGAN

Gate House Fiber Arts
2400 Faussett Rd
Howell, MI 48855
(810) 923-1136
gatehousefiberarts.com

Heritage Spin & Weaving
47 E Flint
Lake Orion, MI 48360
(248) 693-3690
heritagespinning.com

Maple Row Stock & Wool
1059 Cline Rd
Sherwood, MI 49089
(517) 741-7434

Knit & Spin
6544 W. Johnson Rd
Shelby, MI 49455
(937) 477–5531
www.knitandspin.biz

The Hen House Quilt Shop
211 S Cochran Ave
Charlotte, MI 48813
(517) 543-6454
thehenhousemi.com

Woven Art
325B Grove St
East Lansing, MI 48823
(517) 203-4467
wovenartshop.com

MINNESOTA

Carole's Country Knits at Rocking Horse Farm
25636 County Rd 74
St Cloud, MN 56301
(320) 252-2996

Weavers Guild of Minnesota
3000 University Ave SE #110
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 436-0463
weaversguildmn.org

MISSOURI

Hillcreek Yarn Shoppe
4093 E. Ketterer Rd
Columbia, MO 65202
(573) 825-6130
hillcreekyarn.com

NEBRASKA

Laughing Lamb Fibers
925 Illinois St
Sidney, NE 69162
(866) 582-0058
laughinglambfibers.com

Plum Nelly
731 W 2nd Street
Hastings, NE 68901
(402) 462-2490

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hodgepodge Yarns & Fibers
59 Belknap Ave
Newport, NH 03773
(603) 863-1470

NEW JERSEY

The Spinnery
33 Race St
Frenchtown, NJ 08825
(908) 996-9004
spinnery.ajmmobilesolutions.com

Woolbearers Yarns
90 High St
Mount Holly, NJ 08060
(609) 914-0003
woolbearers.com

NEW YORK

Downtown Yarns
45 Avenue A
New York, NY 10009
(212) 995-5991
downtownyarns.com

Fiber Kingdom
137 E Broadway
Salem, NY 12865
(518) 854-7225
fiberkingdom.com

Liberty Ridge Farm & Gardens
6175 Greenway Lowell Rd
Verona, NY 13478
(315) 337-7217
libertyridgefarmandgardens.com

Spinning Room of Altamont
190 Main St / PO Box 427
Altamont, NY 12009
(518) 861-0038
spinningroom.net

Yarn Shop at Foster Sheep Farm
460 W River Rd
Schuylerville, NY 12871
(518) 338-6679
fostersheepfarm.com

NORTH CAROLINA

Earth Guild
33 Haywood St
Asheville, NC 28801
828-255-7818
earthguild.com

Heelside Farms
508 Sedgewood Rd
Four Oaks, NC 27524
(919) 934-2427
heelsidefarms.com

Silver Threads & Golden Needles
41 E Main St
Franklin, NC 28734
(828) 349-0515
silverthreadsyarn.com

Three Waters Farm
5330 Three Waters Lane
Grahm, NC 27253
(866) 376-0378
threewatersfarm.com

Yadkin Valley Fiber Center
321 East Main Street
Elkin, NC 28621
(919) 260-9725
yadkinvalleyfibercenter.org

OHIO

Fiberworks
1350 A North Fairfield Rd
Beavercreek, OH 45432
(937) 429-9276
fiberworksdayton.wordpress.com

Yarn Shop
1125 Kenny Square Mall
Columbus, OH 43220
(614) 457-7836
theyarnshoponline.com

OREGON

Eugene Textile Center
2750 Roosevelt Blvd
Eugene, OR 97402
(541) 688-1565
eugenetextilecenter.com

Pendleton Woolen Mill
8500 SE McLoughlin Blvd
Portland, OR 97222
(503) 535-5786
woolenmill.store

Teaselwick Wools
1313 Mill St SE
Salem, OR 97301
(971) 304-7050
teaselwickwools.blogspot.com

Web-sters
11 N Main St
Ashland, OR 97520
(541) 482-9801
yarnatwebsters.com

PENNSYLVANIA

Darn Yarn Needles & Thread
253 Mercer St
Harmony, PA 16037
(724) 473-0983
darnyarnneedlesandthread.com

The Ross Farm
102 Route 519
Eighty Four, PA 15330
(724) 222-2643
therossfarm.com

The Speckled Sheep
2707 Old Philadelphia Pike
Bird in Hand, PA 17505
(717) 435-8359
thespeckledsheep.com

Twist Knitting & Spinning
5743 Route 202
Lahaska, PA 18931
(215) 794-3020
twistknittingandspinning.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

LoftyFiber
101 NE Main St Suite M
Easley, SC 29640
(864) 810-4747
loftyfiber.com

SOUTH DAKOTA

South Dakota Natural Colored Wool Studio
109 N 2nd St
Groton, SD 57445
(605) 397-4504
sdnaturalcoloredwool.com

TENNESSEE

Smoky Mountain Spinnery
466 Brookside Village Way Ste 8
Gatlinburg, TN 37738
(865) 436-9080
smokymountainspinnery.com

TEXAS

Hill Country Weavers
4102 Manchaca Rd
Austin, TX 78704
(512) 707-7396
hillcountryweavers.com

Yarnorama
130 Gonzalez St
Paige, TX 78659
(512) 253-0100
yarnorama.com

UTAH

Desert Thread
29 E Center St
Moab, UT 84532
(435) 259-8404
desertthread.com

Needlepoint Joint
241 25th St
Ogden, UT 84401
(801) 394-4355
needlepointjoint.com

VERMONT

Green Mountain Spinnery
PO BOX 568
Putney, VT 05346
(802) 387-4528
spinnery.com

Six Loose Ladies Yarn & Fiber Shop
287 Main Street
Chester, VT 05143
(802) 875-7373
sixlooseladies.com

WASHINGTON

Blizzard Yarn & Fiber
6924 NE Fourth Plain Blvd
Vancouver, WA 98661
(360) 991-5350
blizzardyarnandfiber.com

Cabled Fiber & Yarn Studio
125 W 1st St
Port Angeles, WA 98362
(360) 504 2233
cabledfiber.com

Fiber Gallery
8212 Greenwood Ave N
Seattle, WA 98103
(206) 706-4197
fibergallery.com

Northwest Yarns
1401 Commercial St.
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 738-0167
nwyarns.com

Sheeps Clothing
3311 W Clearwater Ave STE B120
Kennewick, WA 99336
(509) 734-2484
aknottyhabit.com

WISCONSIN

Fiber Garden
N5095 Old Hwy. 54
Black River Falls, WI 54615
(715) 284-4590
fibergarden.com

Rainbow Fleece Farm
W7181 Hustad Valley Rd
New Glarus, WI 53574
(608) 527-5311
rainbowfleecefarm.com

Sow's Ear
125 S Main St
Verona, WI 53593
(608) 848-2755
knitandsip.com

Sutters Gold N Fleece
9094 Co Hwy O
St Germain, WI 54558
(708) 805-1650
suttersgoldnfleece.com

The Woolgatherers
25A N. Main St.
Fond du Lac, WI 54935
(920) 907-0510
info@woolgatherers.com
www.woolgatherers.com

WYOMING

The Fiber House

The Fiber House
146 Coffeen Ave
Sheridan, WY 82801
Vendors for Schacht, Ashford, and Kromski wheels and looms. Supplies for all fiber arts needs. Individual and group classes. See our website for more.
(877) 673-0383
thefiberhouse.com

CANADA

Where the Wildflowers Grow Gallery
1281 West Riverside Drive
Perth-Andover, NB E7H 5G9
Canada
(506)273-2217
wildflowergallery.net

JAPAN

Kakara Woolworks Kurashiki
2154 Nakasyo
Kurashiki-shi, Okayama-ken
710-0016
Japan
+81-(0)86-486-3099
kakara-woolworks.com

UNITED KINGDOM

George Weil & Sons
Old Portsmouth Rd
Peasmarsh, Guildford GU3 1LZ
United Kingdom
01483 565 800
www.georgeweil.com

The Handweavers Studio and Gallery
140 Seven Sisters Road,
London N7 7NS
020 7272 1891
handweavers.co.uk

Contact Michaela Kimbrough for magazine standing order opportunities.
mkimbrough@longthreadmedia.com

Miranda Mims

Archivist and Curator

Tell us about your day job.

I am the Joseph N. Lambert and Harold B. Schleifer Director of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation at the University of Rochester in New York. I am also the cofounder of the Nomadic Archivists Project, an initiative devoted to developing relationships and beginning conversations around preserving legacy, memory, connection, and trust in the African diaspora. This is an exciting career to be in, allowing me to actively engage in archiving and preserving our shared cultural heritage. Special collections are important because they speak to the human experience—past, present, and future. Living through a shared experience, such as a global pandemic, can bring the importance of documentation to the forefront, allowing us to appreciate the historic moment we are in together and see how connected all of us are in this shared story. We are the archives, and the archives are our portal to the future.

How did you become a spinner, and do you have other fiber hobbies?

In high school, I took a class in costume design, in which I learned to sew. My teacher taught me to knit in the downtime. From that point on, I was hooked! However, when I was foolishly running through an airport trying to catch a flight some years back, I broke a bone in my hand. Now I have trouble holding needles for an extended period. This event led me to spinning as a healing process. Spinning entered my world about eight years ago when I was living in Harlem, New York. Before that, it never even occurred to me how yarn was made. I remember purchasing *Start Spinning* by Maggie Casey, *Respect the Spindle* by Abby Franquemont, and a spindle and thinking, "I have no idea what to do next!" I decided to take a class to help me begin, which deepened my appreciation for the vast array of fiber choices and the way different techniques could influence outcomes. I found a great fiber community in the city, including Spin City and Harlem Needle Arts.

Miranda Mims centering herself in her spinning space.

Photo by Minda Harts

Miranda Mims showing artifacts from the collection at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Photo by Steven G. Fullwood

What is your favorite thing about spinning?

The best thing about spinning is how connected I feel when I'm processing the fiber, holding it in my hand, and feeling it twist. I also love the community, meeting and talking with other enthusiasts and practitioners. I appreciate how this art connects me to so many people. Connection and community are what also drove me to a career in the archives.

Beyond that, the real benefit is that it helps center me. Especially when I feel a loss of control in my life, spinning is where I can find peace.

For more information about the Nomadic Archivists Project, visit **www.nomadicarchivistsproject.com**.

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@longthreadmedia.com**.