

Northern California Fibershed Producer Newsletter

Tactile Reading for the
Fiber & Natural Dye Community



Natural dye presentation by Anna Stuffelbeam

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Welcome New Producers

We want to welcome and highlight producers who have joined our Northern California Producer community since the publication of the previous issue of this newsletter. As always, you can find information about local fiber, dyes, and skills within our community, alongside direct links to contact or support their enterprises, in our Producer Directory: fibershed.com/producer-directory/

- **Alpacas of El Dorado** – Laurie Findlay is dedicated to the continual improvement in the quality of both Suris and Huacayas, and welcomes visitors by appointment in the beautiful Sierra Foothills midway between Sacramento and South Lake Tahoe.
- **Henderson Studios** – in peaceful, forested Point Arena, Jennie Lee Henderson weaves handspun tapestry rugs and throws in natural colored wool, “a perfect match for my designs of hills and valleys, reflections in a stream, and the geometry of nature that surrounds me.”
- **Hollow Bone** – devoted to the practice of ancestral skills and “clean made leather,” Shele Jessee has been tanning animal hides for eight years, is now based on the Central Coast and Northern California and offers brain-tanned goods, workshops, custom ranch work, and more.
- **Hulsman Ranch** – run by sisters Hannah and Susan Tangeman, Hulsman Ranch raises Suffolk and Cheviot sheep as part of an integrated system in Lassen County, utilizing a seasonal rotational grazing system focused on plant and root health.
- **Integrity Alpacas & Fiber** – from just four alpacas to over 20 in the Vacaville-based herd today, Charlene Schmid focuses on fiber quality and has a fully stocked inventory of alpaca yarn, felted soap, dryer balls, and handmade items.
- **JG Switzer LLC** – beginning with the desire to make the most beautiful blankets in the world, Jessica Green Switzer and company are devoted to the advancement of wool and heritage breeds in particular, with a forthcoming collection milled in their Sonoma County design studio.
- **Marin Sun Farms** – with a commitment to restoring the vitality of our foodshed, Alessa Palmer and team offer local abattoir services and direct distribution, as well as locally and naturally tanned hides.
- **New Agrarian Collective** – a collective of farm businesses at the School of Adaptive Agriculture, Ruthie King, and collaborators raise Gotland and Icelandic sheep along with vegetables, pastured meat and eggs, grains and bread, cut flowers, and orchard fruits at Ridgewood Ranch, in Willits, CA.
- **Oakland Fiber** – with the belief that slow is better, Sheng Lor designs and weaves textiles by hand using natural dyes, American grown fibers, and vintage handlooms, offering workshops and custom products in what was once the largest cotton mill west of the Mississippi.



Icelandic Ewe by Johanna Greenberg

This second volume of the Fibershed Producer Newsletter is designed to be a space to re-acquaint and connect, as well as refresh ourselves on the who and what of our projects and collective efforts.

We look forward to hearing from you about what kinds of information sharing, column ideas, poems, art, doodles, updates on your family and business, and notes from the field that you'd like to offer for the next publication. Newsletters will come out twice yearly to start, and our next edition will be sent in August of 2019.

Ongoing Public Notices: Do you have an internship, a residency, an ongoing course or service that you offer? We will again include a Producer Classified Section in our next newsletter.

Classified ads, as well as your thoughts and visions, should be emailed to office@fibershed.com. Feel free to submit both your ideas and your classified ads between now and July 15th.



Clockwise from top left: UCCE Elkus Ranch, Hollow Bone, Integrity Alpacas & Fiber, Alpacas of El Dorado, Marin Sun Farms, New Agrarian Collective. Photos courtesy of producers.



Clockwise from top left: Hulsman Ranch, Oakland Fiber, Henderson Studios, Spiritplay, Silk Farm, SecondLeaf Workshop. Photos courtesy of producers.

- **SecondLeaf Workshop** – an artisan of many crafts, Lisa Waterman is a natural dye gardener, and dyes, designs, knits, weaves textiles and baskets, spins, and sews in San Ramon.
- **Shepherd’s Dream** – born from a passion for healthy and natural sleep, store manager Renee Carr and company owner Hank Kearns are furthering this mission with wool bedding made in Montague, California.
- **Silk Farm** – with an array of fiber animals in Sutter County including California Red Sheep, Shetland Sheep, and Angora goats, Lynda Silk offers naturally colored yarns and fleeces while John Maral provides shearing services with 25 years of experience working with sheep, llamas, and alpacas.
- **Spiritplay** – felter, natural dyer, spinner, and weaver Robyn Smith creates natural toys and goods in the hills of West Sonoma County, drawing on her career in early childhood education and family history of crafting.
- **Stone Steps Farm** – in tranquil Nicasio, Leigh Kenny and family raise chickens and ducks, breed mini Nubian goats from strong milking lines and produce a small number of Pygora goats and Babydoll Southdown sheep each year, protected by Maremma sheepdogs.
- **True Grass Farms** – dedicated to the land, community, and the future of the ecosystem, Guido Frosini grazes sheep and produces grass-finished beef, pastured hogs, and cage-free heritage fowl and eggs in Valley Ford, within the Estero Americano watershed.
- **UCCE Elkus Ranch Environmental Education Center** – facilitating hands-on education in the processes of producing food and fiber, Elkus Ranch Environmental Education Center is a unique and accessible space on the coast near Half Moon Bay.
- **Wildcat West** – storyteller and naturalist, Alison Smith creates ambitious installations and performances that engage the senses through a union of place and process, examining her native Bay Area through visual art including felted works.
- **Woolgatherer Carding Mill** – following fiber through every phase from pasture to finished product, the Montague-based mill creates wool batting for bedding products, crafts, and custom orders.



Clockwise from top left: Stone Steps Farm, JG Switzer, True Grass Farms, Wildcat West. Photos courtesy of producers.

Producer Voices



What do knitters want?

BY GAYLE RAVENSCROFT

A deceptively simple question, we turned to producer member Gayle Ravenscroft to hear insights into how locally produced yarns can best connect with a growing community of makers who value an authentic story and a well-crafted skein. Through Pacific Knitting Retreats, Ravenscroft offers exclusive experiences designed to educate and nurture knitters in the inspiring environments of Northern California. A Northern California knitter, she has worked and instructed at regional yarn shops and now teaches by appointment with private students and in weekly small groups.

Based on your experience in the knitting sector, what is your sense of knitter interest in local yarns?

Knitters have developed an awareness of local yarns, and their potential impact on our agricultural communities and my sense is that they are eager to participate.

What do you think a typical knitter looks for when choosing a yarn?

I'm not sure we are ready to appeal to a 'typical' knitter. But we are definitely ready to appeal to an educated knitter. And that's good, because we are attempting to penetrate a niche market, at least initially,



and that market appears ready for us. That being said, our knitters are looking to have a pleasurable experience with the whole process of their crafting. From the 'story' of the yarn and the charm of the pattern, to the wearing and/or gifting of their finished work. The 'type' of yarn chosen is directly related to the object they are making ... how will it be worn (next to the skin, on hands, around a neck or head?), by whom (i.e. can the recipient care for it?) and the initial charm of the 'squish' ... i.e. how does it feel in their hands and do they want to spend time with it (knitting is seldom fast!). This is why 'kits' and KALs (knitalongs) are a great idea I think. That way we can curate the suitability - and win hearts and minds with a lovely finished object.

By the way: this question used to be all about 'soft' and while handfeel is still a very important factor, enough knitters have had the bad experience of finished objects that didn't last, pillled horribly and then lost their shape instantly, that they understand that superwash merino is not the answer to anybody's dreams! A growing awareness of how unhealthy this process can be has also emerged (thankfully!)



How might local yarn producers catch the eye (and hands) of knitters — what qualities or attributes create a stand-out yarn offering?

I hesitate to try to define eye catching attributes. I think there are as many motivations as there are knitters. And they are not monogamous users. In fact, it relates a lot to the answer above the fiber has to create a finished object that is desired. So, a toothy yarn with tight plies will grab the attention of a colorwork knitter, merino and alpaca single might appeal for a hat or cowl project. What I can say is that the care and quality in the production of whatever fiber is produced – scouring, carding, spinning and dyeing (or not), end up with skeins that knitters' respond to.

For those who may be making fiber processing decisions this shearing season, do you have any advice related to choosing yarn weight, ply, skeins vs. cones — is there even such a thing as a “most popular” yarn type?

I don't think that 'backing into' production based on what a knitter will want, is necessarily the way to think about this particular question. Most producers have a story to tell ... and that is embodied in their fiber. I think they know (on some level) what their fiber wants to become ... is it particularly springy, crunchy, beautifully naturally colored, soft, smooth? Any of these would suggest a possible end result – and if the fiber becomes its best self, then knitters will follow! Knitters prefer skeins, mainly because they can see every part of what they're buying and retain as much loft as possible until caking it at the last possible minute! And, although I am completely unqualified to speak for weavers, I believe they prefer cones.

Follow along for more: @pacificknittingretreats on Instagram and pacificknittingretreats.com

For further reading, fiber & yarn producers may find useful guidance in:

- *The Knitters Book of Wool: The Ultimate Guide to Understanding, Using, and Loving this Most Fabulous Fiber* – by Clara Parkes
- *The Fleece & Fiber Sourcebook: More Than 200 Fibers, from Animal to Spun Yarn* – by Carol Ekarius and Deborah Robson
- *The Field Guide to Fleece: 100 Sheep Breeds & How to Use Their Fibers* – by Carol Ekarius and Deborah Robson

To map out the costs and decisions involved in adding value to fiber, download Fibershed's free worksheet on modeling and estimating the yarn-making process: www.fibershed.com/programs/textile-economy/mill-inventory/



When Blue is Green: Locally Grown Indigo

BY CRAIG WILKINSON

This will be my fifth year growing *Japanese indigo*, *Persicaria tinctoria*, in Sonoma County, California and surrounding areas.

My introduction and inspiration to grow indigo came from Rebecca Burgess, founder of Fibershed, back in 2013, while attending a presentation at the Jimtown General Store in Geyserville, California, where she was introducing her first book, *Harvesting Color*, and giving away indigo seedlings.

Who would have guessed only a couple years later I would be growing thousands of indigo plants at multiple farms, presenting with Rebecca and giving away seedlings I had grown?

“When Blue is Green” is an account of my recent history growing, processing and dyeing with naturally grown indigo.

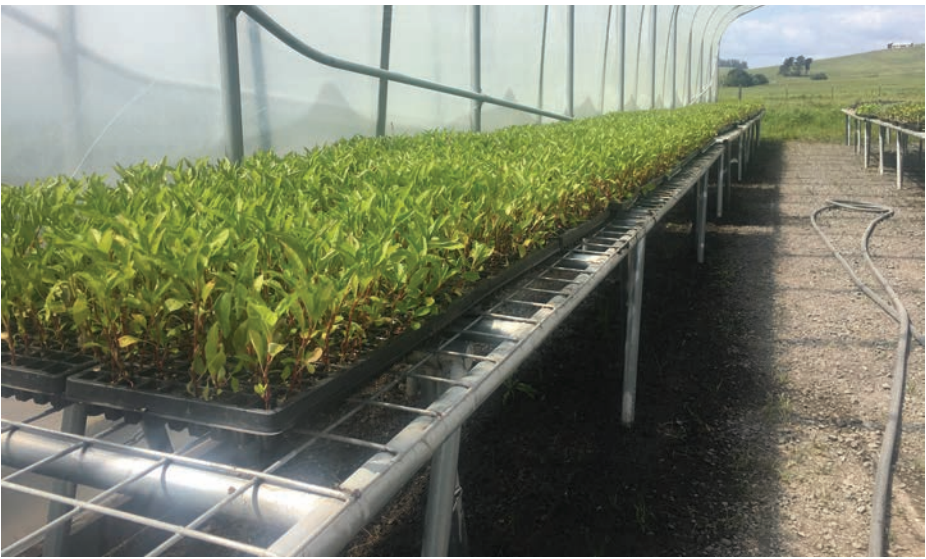
Blue is Green when indigo is grown and processed naturally and responsibly. Our indigo was grown on regional farms using organic and biodynamic farming practices. Our indigo seed has naturalized regionally over the last four years.

Blue is Green when naturally grown indigo is available as an alternative to petroleum based blue dye stuffs. Production of synthetic indigo has a petroleum base and includes formaldehyde and cyanides.

Blue is Green at Fiber Circle Studio in Cotati, California, a wonderful fiber arts makers space and home to ‘community’ indigo dye baths made from our locally grown indigo. Alisha Reyes, owner of Fiber Circle Studio, and I have maintained community indigo dye vats over the last year while also presenting a series of workshops. Skeins of yarn have been dyed to knit and weave projects from local artisans.

Blue is Green when our locally grown indigo is used to dye cones of cotton yarns to supply our local mill to create yardage of denim. We are not quite there yet but are researching the methods to determine ‘best practices’ for dyeing at this scale.

Blue is Green when indigo is a viable alternative crop for local farmers along with other dye crops. Every year we get more requests for indigo seedlings. This also helps secure a healthy seed supply.



Blue is Green when all the beneficial wellness properties of indigo are appreciated and used as needed. Parts of the Indigo plant have special qualities such as an anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, and are used to treat skin conditions, including eczema and psoriasis.

Visit fibershed.com and www.fibercirclestudio.com to learn more about our local indigo community, upcoming presentations, demonstrations, workshops, indigo seeds, and seedlings.

Craig Wilkinson has grown and processed Japanese indigo in Sonoma County for the past five years and can be contacted at craigsIndigo@gmail.com.



Keyaira Terry is pleased to present her debut solo exhibition at Gallery 212.

March 7 – 30, 2019
Opening Reception: March 7, 2019 | 5:30pm – 7:30pm
276 E Napa Street, Sonoma | Gallery 212 / Sonoma Community Center | Gallery Hours: Everyday 8am – 9pm

In this exhibition, Terry shows her most recent body of work of hand-woven pieces consisting of a mix of leather, locally sourced, high-quality wool and plant materials. Many of Terry’s pieces will feature fibers, materials and natural dyes sourced from Fibershed producers such as Lani’s Lana, Craig’s Indigo, Fiber Circle Studio, Mendocino Wool & Fiber Inc, Black Rock Ranch and Twirl Yarn. Terry’s sensitivity is reflected in each resulting piece, combining her fascination and passion for form, color, and consciously sourced materials.

To learn more on Keyaira Terry’s process and technique, join her for a coinciding workshop:
March 23, 2019 | 11:30am – 4:30pm
276 E Napa Street, Sonoma / Sonoma Community Center



Tender Shepherds Produce Kinship Fiber

BY LESLIE ADKINS

The **Tender Shepherds** is a new subgroup of Fibershed Producers. Our product is called **Kinship Fiber**.

Tender Shepherds Vision

We birth a worldwide movement that:

- Increases the quality of life for animals and humans
- Builds and expands markets for artisanal natural fiber products
- Increases wealth and abundance in sustainable ways
- Brings healing and joy
- Continues to grow and expand after we have passed on

Tender Shepherds Mission

- We observe and reverently acknowledge our heart connections with our animals
- We care for our animals’ wellbeing from preconception, through life, until a humane death at the end of their natural lifespan
- We articulate and refine our philosophy and management practices
- We attract fiber producers, designers, artisans, customers, and end users who appreciate our vision and mission and want to be a part of the movement, giving and receiving
- We support one another in the benefits and challenges of this kind of farming
- We build on the already-expressed interest from the public for this kind of product
- We offer our model to help others discern their best path forward
- We create a new product verification choice in the online Fibershed Marketplace

The initial **Tender Shepherds** group of seven Fibershed producers came together after Leslie Adkins of Heart Felt Fiber Farm made a short presentation at the November 2018 Fibershed Symposium. Rhoby Cook, Sally Fox, Linda Gamble, Brooke Sambol, Amy Skezas, and Donna Spilman have joined Leslie to discuss and codify our philosophy and practices and to develop our name and brand. We are shepherds who have each been raising and/or caring for fiber animals from 2 to 30 years. We have each traveled our individual paths to arrive at this philosophy and these practices based on our life experiences and perspectives. Our flocks range in size from 3 to 230 animals and include purebred and crossbred Merinos, Shetlands, CVM, Ouessants, Icelandics, fiber goats, and camelids.

We are evolving and growing group. We welcome other shepherds who share our philosophy. To learn more, please contact Leslie Adkins (info@heartfeltfiberfarm.com) or any others in the group.

What Is a Tender Shepherd? We Share a Philosophy:

- Fiber animals are intelligent, social beings with a love of life and basic needs for companionship, food, water, shelter, appropriate veterinary care, and protection from predators
- We value, cherish and rejoice in the unique bonds that form in the course of our long-term relationships with our fiber animals
- We respect our fiber animals as we respect our companion animals; we want fiber animals to live full-length natural lives just as our companion animals do

- Fiber animals can provide ecological services such as eco-grazing, restoration grazing, and carbon farming partnership; we can maintain our flocks at successful levels for these activities without breeding or harvesting additional animals for meat
- Beautiful, functional, strong and bountiful fleeces and wool products can be produced from flocks that are predominantly adult ewes and wethers

We Care for Our Flocks:

Our overriding principle of care is that we manage our flocks to enhance animal health, welfare and wellbeing, avoiding unnecessary suffering and loss of life of our cherished friends. For example:

- We manage our grazing grounds to provide quality space and food for our animals
- We minimize stress
- We avoid procedures that cause unnecessary pain, and arrange for pain mitigation
- We arrange to have our fiber animals regularly sheared and hoof-trimmed by competent and humane professionals to enhance animal health and wellbeing; this may involve paying the shearer extra to take more time and care
- For male fiber animals not to be used for breeding, we provide for pain-mitigated, humane castration under the guidance of our trusted veterinarians
- When considering moving individual fiber animals out of their home base for any reason, we consider the importance of bonds and long-term relationships among the animal family, flock or herd
- We limit breeding to produce animals that will be under the care of a Tender Shepherd and strive to place any animals that we cannot keep in the care of a Tender Shepherd
- We care for our aging and sick animals until it is clear that quality of life has deteriorated significantly without hope for improvement; then we may choose to end their life humanely

We Care for Our Ourselves in Community:

- We connect with other **Tender Shepherds** periodically to discuss our work and shared interests and concerns, to find better ways of doing things and to share our knowledge, experience, strength, and hope
- We share the **Tender Shepherd** philosophy and stories about our producers, flocks, and animals; this widens our network of connections with people who feel a kinship with our ways; people value and find joy in these connections

We Produce Kinship Fiber as a Premium Product:

- **Tender Shepherds** derive no profit from meat market animals
- We often incur higher-than-customary veterinary and shearing costs
- The going price of wool raised under other philosophies does not cover a **Tender Shepherd’s** expenses
- Our **Kinship Fiber** products are priced to reflect our costs and to allow us to continue bringing these special products to consumers who are seeking something that reflects their values
- People are enthusiastic about paying a little more to honor and acknowledge our philosophy and practices; people want to belong to this movement



Sketch by Johanna Greenberg



Textile Studio Opens in Converted Cotton Mill

Oakland Fiber launches a series of weaving classes this year in the historic California Cotton Mill building. The studio offers beginning and advanced classes in weaving and is headed by Sheng Lor, a textile maker of more than 20 years.

Sheng has been teaching weaving since 2012 and was working with weavers with special needs until 2018. Most recently, she helped to create Hope Services’ new weaving program for adults with developmental disabilities in the south bay as Hope’s Master Weaver. For her, weaving is physically and intellectually empowering. Through teaching, she has seen people of a wide range of abilities, age, and backgrounds successfully weave beautiful cloths.

Now Sheng runs Oakland Fiber, a newly-opened, slow cloth studio in Oakland, CA. Guided by the belief that slow is good, Oakland Fiber uses natural hand dyed yarns in the studio and makes handwoven products that promote sustainable living. Weaving workshops are offered regularly throughout the week. The classes provide beginners insight into how cloth is made and seasoned weavers the opportunity to advance their craft.

The studio is housed inside the California Cotton Mill building, once considered the largest cotton mill west of the Mississippi. The building stands at the heart of Jingtletown, a neighborhood named for the jingling of coins in mill workers pockets on payday. The mill was converted to artist studios in the early 2000s but remains a historical landmark with many of its original features. Visitors to Oakland Fiber can view the cotton mill’s historical exhibit in the lobby.



A complete list of classes can be found online at www.oaklandfiber.co.

Upcoming classes:

Weaving Introductory Workshops

Multiple dates and times are available.

Our introductory workshop gives an overview of the most fundamental weave structure. Students will become familiar with a loom and weave a project in three hours. No previous experience is necessary, and people of all abilities are encouraged to attend.

Beginning Weaving

Students learn to dress a loom, weave, and finish a project of their choice. Classes meet on four consecutive Saturdays: March 2, 9, 16, and 23, 11 am - 2 pm. Students enrolled in Beginning Weaving can schedule free open studio time outside of class during the weeks of their enrollment.

Designing and Warping Intensive

Sat-Sun, March 30-31, 11 am - 5 pm

Learn to design your own weaving project and wind your own warp to take home, in this weekend design intensive. The class accommodates both new and seasoned weavers. Instructions will be personalized to each student’s project interest.

Oakland Fiber

California Cotton Mill Building
1091 Calcot Place #314
Oakland, CA 94606

weave@oaklandfiber.co
www.oaklandfiber.co





Lani's Lana Update

BY LANI ESTILL

Lani's Lana ~ Fine Rambouillet Wool is developing nine new yarns this year and nine new colors! We use two supply chains for our yarns. The white wool goes to the East Coast, and the natural colored yarn goes to Wyoming.

The **white wool supply chain** starts with shearing on the Bare Ranch, then with the help of Roswell Wool, it is micron tested and shipped to **Chargeurs Top Mill** in South Carolina where it is scoured and made into a combed top.

Then it goes to **Jagger Mill** in Springvale, Maine to be spun into yarn. We make four different yarns starting with a single then plying it into a Fingering, Sport, Worsted and Aran weight yarn. Using one single and plying it up to different weights is a way to maintain cost and still have a variety of yarns. We also make a fine lace weight that is used to weave the 100% Wool Community Supported Cloth.

From Jagger Mill, it travels to **Swan's Island** in Rockport, Maine where it is naturally dyed into our 9 new colors that can be repeated (within a margin of error, since they are still using natural dyestuffs). The color aspect is very exciting, and although they are not from our Fibershed, it is a practical way to achieve natural color!! We are still naturally dying in our dye studio at Warner Mountain Weavers, but the outsourcing enables us to scale and provide these yarns to a larger audience.



The **natural colored wool supply chain** is completely different than for the white wool! It starts at the shearing time when the black and gray wool is sheared from the sheep at the end of each day, so it doesn't get mixed with the white wool. The wool is shipped to **Mountain Meadows Wool Mill** in Buffalo, Wyoming.

Mountain Meadows is a one-stop wool mill, and they do it all, from scouring, carding and combing to the spinning, skeining and twisting at the end. We've been working with Mountain Meadows for three years now, and each year we've been able to produce new more interesting yarns. This year we will be adding a Fingering and Worsted yarn using the same single as we have been using for our Sport weight yarn. We will have three colors and three weights of yarn — Black, Medium Gray, and Light Gray. We are also testing a Semi-worsted Bulky that will be offered in the same three colors. That's nine new yarns!! This is huge and will be a great addition to our yarn. It's feeling like a grown-up yarn line!!



We will be naming all these yarns this year too!! What an honor and a challenge. It's not quite like naming your kids, but it's close!! I've been thinking about it a lot lately!!

To follow our progress, visit our website, Lanislana.com and add your name to our newsletter list.

The First California Linen Knit Top

BY MARLIE de SWART

I had the pleasure of meeting Sandy Fisher, the founder of Chico Flax, during the last Fibershed Board meeting. She talked about the process of growing flax for linen (there are 2 kinds of flax, flax for linen and for seeds) and she showed some samples of the first pieces woven from her linen.

I was intrigued. Especially because I grew up in Southern Holland very close to where traditionally flax was being grown and harvested in Flanders, Belgium. My nun aunts, who taught me everything fiber, always used linen for their lace work. So I asked whether I could experiment with some of it.

She sent me 2 ounces of 2 varieties of flax. I spun and test knitted them in various ways to see how they felt and what the fiber would dictate.

All fibers have an intrinsic value that determines what should be ideally done with it.

Linen is ideally suited for very fine spun, woven or lace garments or table ware. Most 17th century Dutch lace collars were made from linen because of its natural crispness and stiffness. Remember I grew up in Holland, it is in my blood.

After Sandy’s first full harvest, she told me she could spare 10 ounces of flax for me to make something, and she sent me 10 stricks of 1 once each. Beautiful light brown stricks that smelled of mowed grass.

I started to spin, my lungs protested so I started to wear a mask. The flax was stiff and dusty. In general you spin flax wet to capture the small fibers that spring loose while spinning to glue them to the main strand.



The saying “spinning straw into gold” is not a misnomer. It sometimes feels like you are spinning straw with remnants of the outer bark still visible after retting and the process of preparing a strick is so work intensive. See Sandy’s article in Fibershed’s first issue.

I decided to ply the thin spun singles, so knitting would be easier with a slightly thicker thread. Both the single and 2 ply looked and felt like rope. I did some more reading up on what to do to soften it. And this meant boiling it in a concoction of soap and soda ash for 4 hours, dry it and then scour it some more by boiling it for 4 more hours. This turned the flax into a beautiful cream color and so much softer than before yarn.



Knitting with linen is different from knitting with wool, or alpaca or any animal fiber because it has no give, no elasticity. The reason it is so suited for bobbin lace making, or weaving, is because you lay the strand of fiber where you want it and it stays there. With knitting you loop and things move around. Having said that the lace knitted top turned out to be OK.





Supporting and Strengthening the Sense of Touch with Natural Toys in Early Childhood

BY ROBYN LYNN SMITH

This Story begins a long, long time ago when we were young children. Our first and most precious toys were those found in nature, whether you were surrounded by forest, pasture, or a small patch of yard, that is where you will find the young child. If you observe children in outdoor play, you will watch a whole imaginary world created, a patch of grass and a log become a home, a few sticks a doorway, and rock the foundation.

Just as a house requires a strong foundation, the foundation of early childhood is based on nourishing and strengthening of the foundational senses, this begins in utero.

Rudolf Steiner who created the Waldorf School Movement outlined 12 senses in the development of the child and education, the four “Foundational Senses” or “Life Senses” are the emphasis in early childhood, and are as follows.

1. Sense of Touch
2. The Life Sense
3. The sense of Self Movement
4. The sense of Balance



At the top of the List is number one, the tactile sense. The sense of touch is an experience where the child meets the world around him, where do I end, and the other, or the outer world begin? Swaddling for the infant in the first few months supports the sense of touch and provides security. These are our first experiences with boundaries, and correspond with the “ego” our sense of self.

The senses are our pathways to relating, a kind of communication with the world around us. The natural world provides a vibrational connection and experience of all that is. The young child connects with the living concepts behind Sense impressions, with this knowledge, it seems appropriate to provide toys and tools that are created of natural materials, and are of the natural world. The senses nourish and regenerate the body, brain, and inner organs. Neurodevelopment and

its stages are tied directly to our sense experience at an early age and can affect the way we relate with the world, physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. It is important to pay attention to what we are feeding the senses, in particular in the early stages of human development. A computer or flat screen does not provide a living concept or vibration at its root.

The Nature experience is a vast subject that Waldorf Teachers are passionate about and much effort is brought in bring a “Living Curriculum” to each class.

I was inspired to design and create natural toys following eighteen years as a Kinder Teacher, and an in depth observation of the young child.

I feel passionate about the experience and results of earth based education. I have been blessed to co-create and teach in several Wilderness Playgroups and Homeschool programs on Ranches here in West Sonoma County California, and every classroom I’ve ever held was connected to a garden. I support the regenerative movement in agriculture, it’s of the most importance with the current challenges we face globally. I trust that if we enrich the lives of young children with a direct connection with Nature, Organic Toys, and artistic experience, the next generations will become stewards of the earth and hold a better understanding of themselves, hence supporting all living systems and beings in the world.

Spiritplay
Camp Meeker, CA
Email: elfquene@gmail.com
Facebook: Love at Spiritplay
Instagram: [@spiritplay.natural.toys](https://www.instagram.com/spiritplay.natural.toys)



Valley Oak Wool Mill Update

BY MARCAIL McWILLIAMS

Last November (2018) I celebrated one year of business! Hooray! Within that year were some huge challenges, but also some wonderful victories. Reflecting on how far I’ve come within one year feels uplifting and I’m expecting this feeling to build with each year that passes.

MACHINES: The main challenge from last year was a broken plying frame. It was damaged when it was moved from one building to another, and spent a total of six months out of commission. Since almost all of my customers ask for plyed yarn I was unable to finish any of those orders for six months! With the help of a couple friends it is now up and running, which I’m extremely thankful for!

Another mill improvement is a can coiler for the card, which coils the sliver into a bag as it comes off of the machine. This improvement allows me to produce sliver more safely, and much more efficiently.

Recently I’ve been learning about gear changes to my roving frame which put more or less twist into yarn and I have come up with a solution to spin yarn quicker.

Lastly, parts for better indoor climate control have been purchased and are being assembled as I type. This will enable me to have more days where I dictate my production schedule instead of being controlled by the weather. So much time can be lost because of dry winds creating static that wreak havoc on my daily milling plans. This improvement will be most helpful in the dry summer months when there is very low humidity.

NEW CUSTOMERS: I’ve enjoyed connecting with Fibershed producers such as Spring Coyote Ranch. She has a beautiful variety of naturally colored Navajo Churro fleeces and spends so much time beforehand skirting them. She puts the most care into what she brings me, it’s a joy to process her wool into high quality yarns. Navajo Churro does very well at my mill so I’m glad we’ve found each other.

Wild Oat Hollow has also been really fun to get to know not only through wool and fibers but with her soaps and lotions. She has a contagious excitement for great quality products that are beneficial for both people and the earth. Both of these producers have high quality at the forefront of what they do, it’s an honor to be a part of the product they bring to the marketplace.

NEW FIBERS: A fiber that is new for me to process is Gotland wool. I find it to handle very similarly to Wensleydale. Hairy fibers like these don’t have the crimp to hold themselves together during processing so I require a 30% blend of wool with crimp to aid in processing. Customers can purchase blending wool from me or supply their own blending wool if needed. Breeds that usually need to be blended are Cotswold, Wensleydale, Gotland, Lincoln, and sometimes Churro and Icelandic if the undercoat isn’t substantial enough.

I’m thankful for a strong Fibershed community that supports what I do and I’m very excited for what 2019 will bring!



Producer Classifieds



Do you have sliver or roving you’d like turned into yarn?

Even fine wool roving is not a problem! Typically, I make a 2ply DK yarn for my customers. Right now, I don’t make any plyed yarn finer than Sport/DK (depending on the fiber).

Send me an email at valleyoakwoolmill@gmail.com to discuss getting your roving spun!

Classifieds continue on the following 4 pages.

Producer Classifieds (continued)



Fiber Circle Studio

Fiber Circle Studio offers an array of fiber related workshops, and equipment in the areas of weaving, spinning, fiber processing, dyeing, knitting, crocheting, and felting. In addition to classes, the studio may be accessed through Day Use or Membership and is available to rent for teaching classes and hosting gatherings.

Fiber Circle Studio
8099 La Plaza Ste H, Cotati, CA 94931
707-242-3400
alisha@fibercirclestudio.com
fibercirclestudio.com



Wine Country Yarn Hop

The planning stages are beginning for 2019’s Wine Country Yarn Hop - it’s like a bar crawl but for yarn shops and the like! Fiber Circle Studio is looking for a handful of Fibershed Producers to sell their products (mainly yarn), as well as demonstrators and potentially vendors interested in offering a “Make + Take Station”.

The fine details are still in the works, and some details will be determined by those who are interested in vending. Dates of Event: July 19-21 (Exact vending dates TBD)

Contact: Alisha (**alisha@fibercirclestudio.com**) to get on the list to receive more information as it develops for this year’s big event!

Wanted to purchase:

One white Merino fleece and one white Rambouillet fleece, each representative of the breed. Contact Lynn Moody, **lynn@blueoakcanyonranch.com**.

Industrial Knitting Services

Design a product line, or translate your designs into manufacturable products. Quantities of 50 pieces or more get you the best pricing, but we have no minimum. Design of hand knitting patterns, I can translate a design of your choice into knitting instructions. Contact **connect@myrrhia.com** and visit **www.myrrhia.com** for a portfolio of projects.

Modern Tapestry Weaving Workshops

Keyaira Terry, owner of Keyaiira, offers Modern Tapestry Weaving workshops both publicly and privately. As well as custom; woven installations, looms and home décor. To find out more about her or sign up for one of her workshops please visit **www.keyaiira.com**.



Tapestry Weaving Class at Warner Mountain Weavers

We are excited to be offering a Tapestry Weaving class at Warner Mountain Weavers in Cedarville, CA. This one time class will be taught by Keyaira Terry. Keyaira will be traveling up from the Bay Area just to teach this class. See more of Keyaira’s work @Keyaiira or **www.Keyaiira.com**. She makes gorgeous tapestries and has been using Lani’s Lana Fine Rambouillet Wool in her pieces.

Following the class on Friday, April 5, 2019, there will be a ranch tour of the Bare Ranch in Eagleville, CA. If you are traveling from out of the area this is a rare experience to see more of beautiful Surprise Valley and see where the sheep are raised who grow Lani’s Lana Fine Rambouillet Wool. If the weather is not pleasant, we will do a car tour and tour of the lambing barn including a wool classing demo by Lani Estill, Certified Wool Classer. We can still see the ranch and stay dry!!

You will complete a Woven Tapestry Wall Hanging to take home during the two-day class. Most materials, a teaching fee, and the loom rental are included in the price. An optional lunch and ranch tour is also included.

Schedule

Friday, April 5, 2019
9:00 am - 12:00 pm Tapestry Class
12:00 pm - 1:30 pm Lunch hosted at Warner Mountain Weavers
2:00 - 5:00 pm Optional Tour of the Bare Ranch in Eagleville, CA

Saturday, April 6, 2019
9:00 am - 1:00 pm Tapestry Class

After the class, there will be an optional no-host lunch at Whalen’s Public House in Cedarville and a knitting social back at Warner Mountain Weavers from 2:00-4:00 pm.

If you have questions about the class or are traveling from out of the area and looking for lodging recommendations please call Warner Mountain Weavers at **530-279-2164** or email **lanislana22@gmail.com**.





The WOOLGATHERING

September 5-8, 2019 — Save the Date!

Four glorious days of classes in beautiful Surprise Valley! Learn about techniques, spinning, working with color, wild foraging, local dye plants, natural dyeing and how to process your own wool at the mills. Join us for “Knit Nights” and the ‘Spinning Circle”

Sponsored by Warner Mountain Weavers and Lani’s Lana High Desert Fibershed, Cedarville, California
www.warnermtnweavers.com or 530 279-2164



Fleece to Garment Classes

Series of classes taught by Marlie de Swart and Mimi Luebbermann. Prerequisite is knowing how to spin a straight yarn.

Fleece to Garment series of 5 classes from shearing the sheep to creating a knit or crochet garment. January through May.

Other classes: Spinning exotic Fibers, Special spinning techniques for spinning Locks, Core spinning and Boucle spinning.

For more info go to www.Windrushfarm.wordpress.com



Japanese Indigo Seed

Botanical name: *Persicaria tinctoria*

Source: 2018 Sonoma County, California

Cost: \$20.00 (approximately 100 or more seeds). Includes basic growing instructions & links about processing leaves into a blue dye.

Producer/Supplier: Craig’s INDIGO / Northern California Fibershed Producer

Contact: craigsIndigo@gmail.com



Textile Goods at Oakland Farmers’ Markets

If you find yourself in need of aprons or coffee filters, Geana of GDS Cloth Goods will be at 2 markets this Spring. Find her once a month at each market. Visit gdsclotgoods.com/calendar or email geana@gdsclotgoods.com for specific dates.

Grand Lake Farmers’ Market: Saturdays 9-2, Lake Park Avenue

Temescal Farmers’ Market: Sundays 9-1, 5300 Claremont Avenue



Summer Solace Tallow

Summer Solace Tallow is actively reviving the nourishing traditions of using local grass-fed and pasture raised animal fat to moisturize effectively and soothe skin irritations.

Our tallow-based products contain unique and harmonious blends of organic, wildcrafted Absolutes and essential oils, local extra-virgin olive oil and local tallow from family farms, which we render and combine in small batches.

www.summersolacetallow.com and [@summersolacetallow](https://www.instagram.com/summersolacetallow)

Producer Classifieds (continued)



Summer Solace x Fibershed

Visit the Summer Solace Tallow x Fibershed booth every other Sunday at the Temescal Farmers Market. We bring to you our curated selection of Fibershed products like local yarn, fibers, sundries, felted home goods, climate beneficial garments, handwoven shawls, blankets and scarves, knit kits, luxurious sheepskins, climate beneficial botanical skin care, tallow-based body care, soaps, and candles.

Start: July 1st then every other Sunday
9:00 AM 1:00 PM
Temescal Farmers Market
5300 Claremont Avenue
Oakland, CA, 94618

For more information:
www.urbanvillageonline.com/markets/temescal/

Organizer: Summer Solace Tallow
Email: megan@summersolacetallow.com
Website: www.summersolacetallow.com



Lani’s Lana ~ Fine Rambouillet Wool

A yarn and wool line developed with the principals of Fibershed in mind. The yarns and other wool products are made with Climate Beneficial Wool raised on the Bare Ranch in Northeastern California. Lani offers combed top and yarn at retail to the public and wholesale to commercial artisans. www.lanislana.com



Photo by Paige Green

For sale to Tender Shepherds only:

merino sheep, white and moorit ewes and wethers. The flock has been organic since the 1980’s and is hardy. The wool tests fine and superfine. These animals are small, even for merinos as they are from an Australian wool only line. Adult full grown ewes might weigh 110 lbs, but it takes 3 years to attain that size. Some wethers eventually reach about 140 lbs. They have tails. Ages 2-8 years. Price negotiable. vreseis@icloud.com or 530-796-3388 landline.



Full service alpaca ranch in Central California

We have a variety of colors in our herd of huacaya and suri, and offer fleeces, roving and yarn, as well as spinning, dyeing and felting classes. We also are able to instruct in fleece skirting.

Make an appointment and watch for our class schedule on Facebook (www.facebook.com/macedosminiacre)

Maureen Macedo 209-648-2384, macedosminiacre@gmail.com



Greenhouse+Solar funding opportunities are available

Soliculture has introduced a solar panel designed specifically for crop production and generation of electricity. The panels convert light that is harmful to light that is beneficial to crop development. Renewable energy incentives from the State and Federal governments can pay for both the panels and a greenhouse.

Contact glenn.alers@soliculture.com or visit www.soliculture.com



Meridian Jacobs

Solano County grown yarn available in natural and naturally dyed colors. Weaving and spinning classes scheduled to suit your schedule—just ask!

First lambs due February 27—there will be lambs and adults for sale.

Robin Lynde • 707-688-3493
robin@meridianjacobs.com • www.meridianjacobs.com



Merino Sheep – Kirabo Pastures

Our animals are derived from both Jean Near’s (Utopia Ranch) and Janet Heppler’s (Nebo-Rock) sheep. We are downsizing and I have numerous adult and juvenile animals for sale. My rams consistently win fleece prizes, both at Black Sheep and at Boonville.

Please contact me directly for information: Carrie Ham
kirabopastures@gmail.com or by phone at: 707-275-9252



Fleeces, lambskins and breeding stock for sale

Barinaga Ranch in Marshall, West Marin County: In addition to our high-percentage East Friesian dairy sheep, we now have purebred Romneys (with recessive color) and colored and white purebred Corriedales, as well as Romney/E. Friesian and Corriedale/E. Friesian crosses. See our website: **www.barinagaranch.com** or email me: **marcia@barinagaranch.com**



Super soft Cormo fleeces

Available from Butte Mountain Farm, located in Jackson, CA, in the Sierra Foothills. The sheep wear jackets and range the hills. Cormos have very fine fleeces, micron count is usually between 18 – 25. Next to skin soft roving and yarn is also available. **buttemountainfarm.com**



Alpaca Rentals

For Weddings, Special Events, Photo Shoots. Make your occasion special and fun! Call or e-mail for pricing.

Alpaca Products

Alpaca fleece, roving and yarn for your next project. Natural colors: white, light fawn, brown, silver grey, rose grey and black. Visit our farm store for best selection. Appointments required.

Alpaca Manure

Fresh or lightly composted alpaca manure is mild enough to top dress your plants, but nutritious enough to enrich your soil. Bring your truck, we’ll load it for you. By the pickup load (4-5 ¼ yard buckets) or trailer load - \$10 per load/yard.

Menagerie Hill Ranch, Vacaville, CA
Deb 707.290.7915
deb@menageriehillranch.com



Growing Involvement in the California Healthy Soils Program

While applications for the current round of California’s Healthy Soils Program (HSP) grants are due March 8, Fibershed will continue to be actively engaged with advocating for improvements and increased funding at the state level for this important program. In 2018, HSP was allocated \$15 million in statewide funding to support new implementation of on-farm practices that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build healthy soils. This year’s grant program offers more options of incentivized practices relevant to our Fibershed producers (including hedgerows, riparian restoration, compost application, range planting, prescribed grazing, silvopasture, and many others) as well as higher reimbursement rates than the previous round of grants.

We’re excited that many Fibershed producers are currently preparing applications to receive support for expanding carbon farming practices in their operations, with more help available this year from Resource Conservation Districts and other technical service providers. Over the coming months, we look forward to sharing stories and learnings from these projects in our community. We encourage producers to reach out to Heather Podoll (heather@fibershed.com) to share your thoughts, successes, and challenges with the HSP program, as we collectively work toward greater support and more opportunities to expand carbon farming in our region.



In 2018 Meridian Farm installed a hedgerow and applied compost to a section of their pastures with funding support from the Healthy Soils Program. Here Peter Lofting demonstrates the method he developed to apply compost at a precise rate to small acreages. (photo by Meridian Farm)



The original Fibershed Knitalong shawl, designed by Emily Cunetto (Photo by Paige Green)

Fibershed Knitalong 2019—Coming Soon!

In 2016, we hosted the first Fibershed Knitalong featuring a beautiful shawl pattern designed by Emily Cunetto. Inspired by multiple requests from our fiber producer members, this year we will organize a second Fibershed Knitalong to promote awareness and interest among the wider knitting community in using locally produced and processed yarns. This year’s knitalong will again highlight a unique hand knitting pattern that can be worked in a wide range of local yarns. The knitalong will include digital community-building through social media and blogs, inspiring community participation and encouraging direct support of small-batch yarn makers including Fibershed member farmers, natural dyers, and retailers. The 2019 Knitalong will launch in the second half of the year; yarn producers will have the opportunity to create samples and kits to support yarn purchases at the Fibershed producer marketplace at the fall fashion gala and Symposium. We would like to open the pattern submission/design process to designers throughout our community. If you are a pattern designer interested in participating or if you would like to recommend a designer you admire who is based within our strategic geography of the Northern California Fibershed (from San Luis Obispo to the Oregon border), please reach out to office@fibershed.com.

Business Curriculum

Late winter and early spring will welcome the continuation of our business training with Olivia Tincani and Anjali Oberoi of Olivia Tincani & Co. Feedback so far from producers that have participated has been glowing and we encourage you to take advantage of this incredible opportunity for free coaching and training in all those business and financial skills you wish you had learned in the past.

Upcoming classes round out marketing and financial topics. In the **February 21st marketing course**, you will learn to ground your marketing efforts in foundational thinking and the importance of crafting a marketing plan. We will introduce techniques that are relevant to all business types at every stage of development. Our approach is based on thoughtful strategic planning so that the money spent on promotion is always reflective of your overall core values and business identity. Trainings include templates that can assist in the solo crafting of a marketing plan that acts as a road map for your brand development and future marketing initiatives.

In our **March 18 & 19 Sales Strategy course**, we will cover both the quantitative and qualitative elements of choosing and maintaining a mixed sales channel strategy for your business with revenue coming from various types of customers (retail, wholesale, direct consumer, etc.). We will discuss how to target varied customer groups through different channels, and what diversification means in terms of pricing, margin, and calculating overall potential profit. On the qualitative side, we will teach a holistic approach to evaluate what channels to sell your product through, and why multiple sales channels often offer more stability. Our sales philosophy emphasizes collaboration versus competition and takes the fear out of seemingly scary channels such as wholesale. We will review the pros and cons for the direct to the consumer market and appropriate marketing tactics. We will address specifics for both fiber/fiber arts and meat sales in smaller breakout groups. On the quantitative side, we will evaluate sales channels via the lens of pricing strategy and resulting margins that ultimately contribute to your business bottom line. Margin calculations will consider production and post-production costs unique to the channel, including production labor costs. We use a proprietary tool developed to help distinguish across sales channel differences and their margins, that will help serve your business through change, growth, and expansion stages.

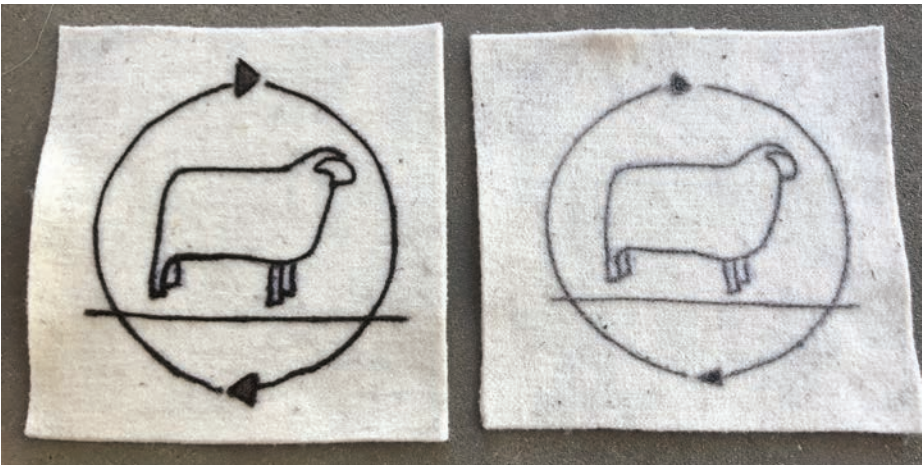
“Managing Cash with Grace” on March 25 & 26 will walk through the necessities and complexities of managing your professional and personal cash flow, with the ever-desired goal of minimizing cash fluctuations and crunches. We will discuss forecasting business growth and related working capital needs through the creation of realistic, usable budgets. We teach how to recognize the need for financing, and we will review various modes of funding including the best time to approach them, relevancy to the business cycle, and tradeoffs across modes. Financing your business often involves taking on personal risk, and our goal includes exploring this risk to ensure making the best use of business and personal assets, evaluating the opportunity costs of decision making, and managing your income and returns at a holistic level.



Climate Beneficial and the Art of Logos

Climate Beneficial fiber denotes fiber that is grown on landscapes that are actively implementing and monitoring their carbon sequestration (or carbon farming) practices. These practices, such as hedgerow establishment, compost application, range planting, and more, can then be correlated with the fiber produced. The garments from that fiber can then be measured to show a “carbon sink” or carbon that has been drawn down out of the atmosphere and cycled back into the soil. To reverse and ameliorate climate change we need these carbon sinks! The Climate Beneficial logo denotes these goods, from finished garments to cloth to yarn to batting and/or raw fiber. Each farm or ranch may have a particular fiber that they organize their verification around. It’s not just for wool! As a result, Fibershed has developed Climate Beneficial logos for flax, alpaca, beef, and we are currently in development for goats.

In addition, Jackie Post (Sheep to Shop) has developed a felted Climate Beneficial sign for producers whose fibers or goods are in the program. At last fall’s Wool & Fine Fiber Symposium we were able to distribute these beautiful signs amongst producers who are growing or using Climate Beneficial fiber. And yes, they are made with Climate Beneficial Wool (sourced from Stemple Creek Ranch and Jensen Ranch in Tomales, CA)! If you are interested in learning more about the Climate Beneficial program, or in pursuing Climate Beneficial status for your farm, ranch, or product, please email Marie Hoff at capellagrazing@gmail.com.



Listening In, from Soil to Skin

By the time this newsletter is in your hands, we hope you’ll join us on another platform: tune in to Fibershed’s podcast, which is called *Soil to Soil*.

A podcast is a form of audio storytelling, similar to a radio show, and *Soil to Soil* will be available for free on the Fibershed website and in the iTunes Podcasts library. The goal of this podcast is to explore the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of Fibershed’s mission to develop regional fiber systems that enhance the health of our biosphere.

Through individual interviews, the podcast will dive into questions such as: *Who grew your clothes? How can fiber production build soil carbon? How can we measure the impacts of carbon farming?* And more.

The seeds for this podcast were first planted several years ago, recognizing the many unique voices, powerful stories, and complex challenges in the broader community of fibersheds emerging in Northern California and beyond. In 2018, we were thrilled to connect with Whetstone Media as an audio producer who has helped nourish this new growth.

Soil to Soil, in podcast form, provides a complement to existing Fibershed educational channels, such as the Northern California producer interview blog posts and annual Wool & Fine Fiber Symposium videos.

Within the growing field of educational audio opportunities, we hope that *Soil to Soil* serves to connect the dots in the lifecycle of clothing and material culture, offering a look at how, and why, our community is working to cultivate fiber and dye systems that build soil and protect the health of our biosphere: <https://www.fibershed.com/podcast/>.

We’re honored to put forth this podcast in great company with shows across the regenerative agriculture, eco-fashion, and fiber arts landscape, including:

- **Bioneers Radio: Revolution from the Heart** – “programs cover a wide range of topics, including intelligence in nature, climate justice, food and farming, gender equity, Indigenous knowledge, reigning in corporate power, and youth activism”
bioneers.org/bioneers-radio
- **Breaking Beans Radio Show** – by the Kentucky Community Farm Alliance
cfakyblog.org/category/breaking-beans
- **Close Knit** – conversation about the ways we use fiber to process world and life events
closeknit.com.au

- **Conscious Chatter: A Podcast Where What We Wear Matters** – “opens the door to conversations about our clothing + the layers of stories, meaning and potential impact connected to what we wear”
consciouschatter.com
- **Down to Earth: the Planet to Plate podcast** – “meet farmers, ranchers, scientists, land managers, writers, and many others on a mission to create a world in which the food we eat is healthy—for us, for the land and water from which it springs, for the lives and livelihoods of the producers, and for the planet”
hquiviracoalition.org/downtoearth
- **Flipping the Table: Honest Conversations about Food, Farming, and the Future** – “dynamic and enlightening conversations with the people who are flipping the table to create new ways to feed the world”
rootsofchange.org/projects/podcast-future-food-farming
- **For the Wild** – “We discuss the critical ideas of our time and parlay them into action for the defense and regeneration of natural communities... join today’s brightest visionaries in this momentous work of reimagining a world where humanity can find its way back into the web of life”
forthewild.world/podcast-main/
- **Next Economy Now** – “highlights the leaders who are taking a regenerative, bio-regional, democratic, transparent, and whole-systems approach to using business as a force for good”
lifteconomy.com/podcast/
- **Regenerative Agriculture Podcast** – “straightforward, actionable information about growing that you can implement right away to increase crop quality, yields, pest resistance, and climate resilience”
regenerativeagriculturepodcast.com/
- **Reverberate by A Verb for Keeping Warm** – “exploring our wide world of textiles and the people who grow, design, make and wear them”
averbforkeepingwarm.com/pages/reverberate
- **Weave Podcast** – “brings together a community of weavers and makers, farmers and mill owners, textile artists and loom manufacturers, to tell the stories of the threads that bind us together”
gistyarn.com/pages/weave-podcast
- **Wool Academy** – “we talk to an industry expert from the wool supply chain – from farm to fashion and beyond – delivering strategies and insights to be successful in wool – all just on the touch of a play button”
elisabethvandelden.com/all-episodes/

Community Centered Cloth: Emerging Stories from Fibershed Affiliates

On either side of the Atlantic, communities are exploring regional cloth prototypes that connect farmers, mills, makers, and wearers. Readers likely recall the Community Supported Cloth project launched in the Northern California Fibershed in 2016, wherein cloth pre-orders powered the supply chain to overcome the capital gap that so often stalls supply chains. Here, we checked in with two approaches currently underway: the Bristol Cloth Project which has successfully aggregated over 400 buyers through online crowdfunding, and the Western Mass Fibershed cloth project, a fabric feasibility study supported through the Fibershed Affiliate Micro-grant seed funding opportunity.



Bristol Cloth Project Brings Regional, Regenerative Textiles to Fruition in the South West England Fibreshed

Q&A with Babs Behan, Bristol Cloth organizer, and owner of Botanical Inks

What inspired the Bristol Cloth Project, and who is involved?

The Bristol Cloth project is very much inspired by the Fibershed system model. We wanted to create a locally sourced and manufactured cloth for our local region, which has a positive rather than a negative impact on the environment. I produce the project as a debut product for my business Botanical Inks. The lamb’s wool is sourced from Fernhill Farm, which is 15 miles from Bristol city centre, in the Mendip Hills. The farm uses holistic farming practices, which regenerate soil and sequester carbon. Botanical Inks uses organic madder and weld to dye the yarn, and the Bristol Weaving Mill is weaving it into 200 metres of cloth for us initially.

How has the fundraising campaign been going, and has anything surprised you?

I recently ran a crowdfunder campaign to raise funds to cover the 1st production of 200 metres of Bristol Cloth.

I was amazed at the initial support from the community, with £7k being raised in the first five days. It was incredibly exciting!! We then were interviewed for a long feature on BBC News, Radio 4 and several local press. We also had articles written up in Selvedge Magazine, No Serial Number Magazine and Permaculture Magazine. It was amazing to see how much interest there was in our story from the press and public! We set a 2nd target of £15k which we hit in the last few days of the crowd funder, and this finally closed on £18k. It was an unbelievably great response! This means we pre-sold nearly all 200 metres of the cloth production, with some left over for samples. This takes out a huge amount of risk from the business, as we now can ship straight to customers as soon as the cloth is manufactured, rather than then having to promote sales.

It has been a massive confidence boost to see how much support, enthusiasm, and excitement there is from the closer and wider community for this project, for environmentally safe and regenerative textiles and locally, within the UK. I’m excited to see that 412 people share this passion and vision. For me, it has been awesomely exciting and encouraging. And I feel more connected and supported on a personal level than ever before, which is very special.

Why is this cloth unique within the ‘landscape’ of heritage woolen goods in the UK?

We do have a small selection of heritage cloth mills dotted about the UK, some even in traditional water mills. What sets this production apart from these few other examples, is that we are working with a regenerative farming system to produce the wool - and using organic 100% plant dyes for colour. And keeping the farming, dyeing and weaving all within a 15-mile radius of each other. I do not know of any other systems such as this currently operating within the UK. However, I sincerely hope this is just the start of a revolution of small scale fibershed systems popping up across the UK.

What does the Bristol Cloth team envision for next steps — what’s on the horizon?

I am now excited to see the weaving part of the production begin, which will then be followed by finishing, cutting, labelling and sewing into garments and accessories and finally shipping to our wonderful pledgers. This is another 6-8 weeks process, and so during this, I am just starting to tentatively consider the next production run. Questions I am asking myself are, do I want to do the same thing again? The same cloth design, or different colours, a different weave design? Do we want to produce a similar amount or perhaps scale it up to a larger quantity? Part of the decision process for me, is what do I need to be able to dye larger quantities of yarn? How will I source the right equipment for this, a bigger and more functional space etc. I’d like to scale up the Botanical Inks dye studio and therefore need to invest in a bigger space, professional equipment and such, which is a bigger endeavor than the initial project. So, there is a lot to consider and action. It may be that we crack on with buying more yarn and run a second production, whilst slowly scaling up the studio to a point where we can get more creative and ambitious? It’s all very exciting and feels full of potential and energy!

Follow along:
Instagram @BristolCloth
Facebook.com/BristolCloth
<http://www.bristolcloth.co.uk/>



Bristol Cloth photos by Landlore



Locally Sourced Shetland Wool Fabric from the Western Mass Fibershed

BY MICHELLE PARISH, NUR TIVEN, AND LISA BERTOLDI

The goal of the project is to create a small run of locally sourced, ethically raised, organically processed wool fabric, made entirely in our region. The project is a collaboration between us as organizers, two sheep farmers and their Shetland wool, our only local wool mill, and our only local weaving mill. The resulting “Fibershed” cloth will be made available for local designers and home sewists, and some will be made into garments by project co-organizer Nur Tiven.

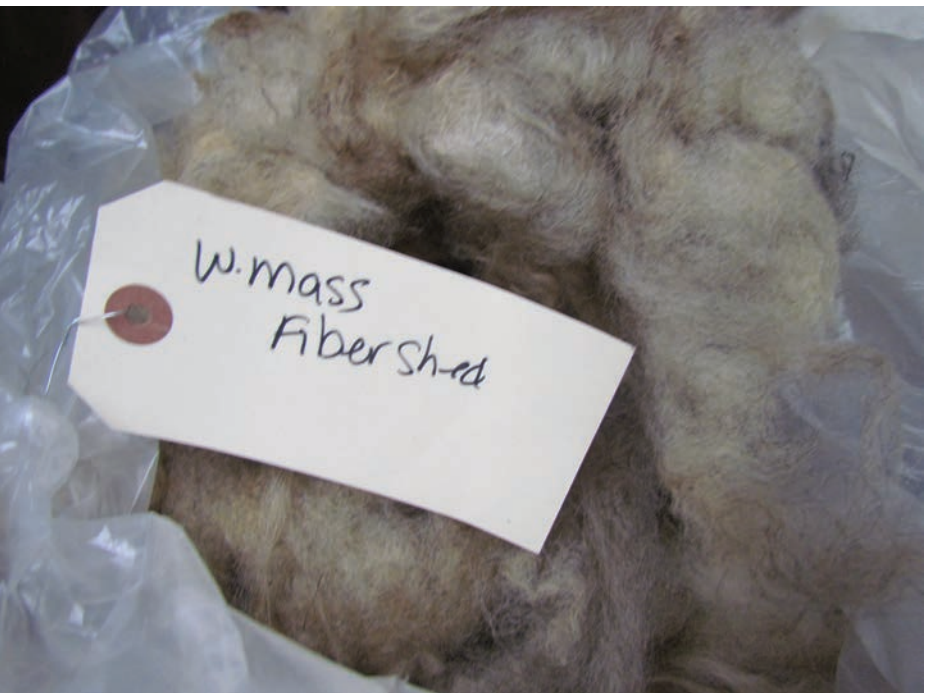
So far, the project has acquired fleeces from 2 local farms, brought the fleeces to Green Mountain Spinnery for custom processing into yarns, and worked with the mill and Peggy Hart (the weaver for the project) to design a yarn suitable for wool apparel fabric.

The Western Mass Fibershed has also conducted 25 surveys at the Fiber Festival of New England to begin to gauge interest in locally sourced clothing and fabric and hosted our first Fibershed invitational roundtable with local farmers, designers, retailers, and makers to broaden our network and let people know about the cloth project.

Once the yarns come back from the mill, we’ll bring them to the weaving mill and have some samples made to decide on a pattern for the twill cloth. We’ve identified some designers with whom we will potentially be working to make some prototype garments from the local cloth, and we’ve begun a list of people interested in buying yardage for their own projects.

By April, we’ll have 40 yards of bioregional wool cloth, some of which will be made available for sale. We could not be more thrilled to see (and instigate) the return of locally made fabric from our region’s wealth of fiber farms and artisans. Stay tuned for updates and producer stories.

Follow along for updates:
Instagram: @westernmassfibershed
Facebook.com/WesternMassFibershed
<http://westernmassfibershed.org/>



Discussing riparian restoration at Freestone Ranch (Photo by Paige Green)

Carbon Farm Cohort

Greetings Fibershed community. In 2018 Fibershed piloted our first Carbon Farm Cohort project, a small, peer-to-peer network of geographically close producers all focused on creating farms and ranches that are engines for ecosystem restoration and carbon sequestration. We thought we would take a moment to reflect on what we accomplished thus far and how we might carry this program forward.

To encourage the people from the six cohort member ranches or farms to exchange ideas and get to know one another, Fibershed organized field walks at the different cohort member’s landbases for all the cohort members to attend. During each field walk, we focused on a particular topic, for example, on-farm composting operations or hedgerows, and we invited a “technical specialist” on that subject from our broader community to join the field walk.

These field walks informed members of the cohort about the specifics of different “carbon farming practices” (many of which are also NRCS Conservation Practices) and the logistics around the implementation of these practices. In the past year, members implemented a number of these carbon farming practices including; new permanent fencing and shelter installations, revamping grazing management and incorporating additional electric fencing to maximize forage efficiency, and approximately 576 linear feet of hedgerows planted or re-invigorated, with an additional 963 linear feet planned for installation in the near future.

Fibershed staff also worked with the producers to take an inventory of their opportunities and goals around creating positive carbon cycles on their farms or ranches. Through a collaborative process with each cohort member, we put all of this information into a carbon farm plan for each farm or ranch. We are in the final stages of formatting these carbon farm plans and are excited for the producers to have this document as a resource for their planning and to help them communicate their goals for carbon drawdown through their land management.

Looking forward, we are working on distilling what we learned from this pilot Carbon Farm Cohort into a framework for future Carbon Farm cohort models and creating carbon farm plans for small farms. We



Learning about compost at Tara Firma Farms (Photo by Rebecca Burgess)

will continue to work with this first cohort to learn about and implement more carbon farming practices, to encourage innovation in carbon farming, and to communicate their work to create resilient ecosystems and carbon drawdown.



FIBERSHED

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Fibershed Staff



Rebecca Burgess is the Executive Director of Fibershed. Her work focuses on developing the vision and funding required for operational planning and execution. She oversees the implementation of the organization's programs and projects, and executes and manages special projects for Fibershed specific to the development of strategic partnerships with sister organizations within the fields of agriculture and design.

If you have questions about the Wool Symposium, Climate Beneficial Fiber Systems, Hemp Research, Indigo feasibility, Carbon Farming or Fibershed's national and international presentation and workshop schedule she can be reached at harvestingcolor@gmail.com.



Jess Daniels is the Director of Communications and Affiliate Programming, where she creates written and visual collateral connecting wearers to the biological and social source of their clothing, and facilitates an international grassroots network of communities building soil-to-soil fiber systems. She has a decade of experience working to strengthen local food and fiber systems, from urban farming and education to sustainable agriculture advocacy campaigns and litigation. She holds a B.A. in Environmental Studies and Visual Art from

Brown University. She facilitates membership engagement and resource development for the Fibershed Affiliate Network, organizes project data and deliverables, and coordinates Fibershed's communications, press coverage, and digital media presence.

If you have questions about Fibershed's newsletter or social media content and strategy, research projects and database organization, or want to connect to our global Fibershed Affiliate peer communities, she can be reached at office@fibershed.com.



Heather Podoll is the Policy Coordinator for Fibershed. Her work covers advocacy and public funding support for our programs and producers, as well as managing the Fibershed Wool Book and a variety of outreach initiatives.

If you have questions about California's Healthy Soils Program or other grant opportunities for producers; public policy collaboration work; the *Wool Book* or other outreach projects, contact Heather at heather@fibershed.com.



Marisol Valles is the General Operations Manager for Fibershed. She oversees human resources and monitors processes, organizational policies, and budgeting. She also coordinates Fibershed events, databases, and the Producer Program member communication.

If you have general inquiries, please contact Marisol at marisol@fibershed.com.



Erin Walkenshaw is fortunate to have worked with a number of non-profit and for-profit entities and farms whose common thread is their work towards the emergence of health in and across systems. Her work with Fibershed is focused on designing and implementing a pilot program to collaborate with land managers to develop and implement carbon farm plans and create a peer-to-peer support network of fellow carbon farmers.

Contact Erin at ewalkens@gmail.com.



Nick Wenner works as Lead Process Engineer for Fibershed. He has worked on several projects with Fibershed since 2016 and joined the team in this new role in February of 2019. He brings diverse hands-on experiences of building and making as well as technical training in mechanical engineering to his work.

Up to now, he led research on indigo dyeing and produced the reports for the True Blue Project as well as developed designs in the continuing vision for a California wool mill. This year, he is focused on fiber system research for bast fibers, working with local mills and California farmers growing hemp to blend bast fibers with cotton, wool and other fibers to produce yarns and textiles. He is also helping to coordinate soil sampling for the Citizen Science program, and - as the season for indigo emerges - answering questions for those interested in applying True Blue research on the ground.

If you are interested in soil sampling or have questions about wool, bast fiber, or indigo processing, contact Nick at nicholas@fibershed.com.



Transitions & Changes: Update from Marie Hoff

For the past three years, I've had the honor of supporting the Fibershed producer community as the Producer Program Coordinator. Its been a wonderful opportunity to work with many of you in greater depth, learn about a multitude of projects happening within our Northern California region, and to serve the greater fiber system as a whole. However, as the producer community has grown by leaps and bounds (hurray!) over the past three years, so has the time needed to serve the role of Producer Program Coordinator fully. Given my animals, farm, and other business, I am not in a place to invest myself in a full-time role, and so that will become a new full-time position available soon. However, I am excited to dive into some new upcoming projects, which look to advance grazing as a widespread tool for fire management, support public education on the animal welfare component of shearing, pilot an integrated grain and grazing demonstration, and continue to host Producer Meet-Ups.

Since the 2017 fires, I've been very passionate about advancing the use of grazing to reduce fire fuel load, from the techniques of "how" to the policies guiding state and local agencies. In 2019 I will represent Fibershed producers as an active member of CA Woolgrower's Subcommittee on Grazing and Wildfire Prevention, helping to develop a white paper on contracted grazing for fuel management and reaching out to agencies such as CalFire and NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) to bring grazing into more common awareness and usage. The state of California has allocated \$35 million in funding for fuel load reduction, and our Subcommittee will do its best to direct those funds towards ecologically-sound grazing. I will also help to document an exciting collaborative project between Magruder Ranch, Mendocino Meats, and Ridgewood Ranch. This collaboration, to graze along the 101 corridor in Mendocino County, may illustrate how both grazing and considering grazing management from a bioregional standpoint, as opposed to a private property standpoint, can serve our greater community and prevent catastrophic fire.

Additionally, a topic of concern in the producer community is the public perception of shearing in relation to animal welfare. In the past year, several brands used incorrect messaging around shearing in their marketing. To help educate the public and push back against this false advertising, I will help Fibershed develop a strategy for communicating the realities of shearing as an appropriate and necessary part of animal welfare. If you have had any concerns from customers about shearing, I would love to hear about them. Taking these (mis)perceptions into account would help us to respond fully to consumer concerns and confusion. Having a greater cultural norm to relate to when communicating with customers can benefit Fibershed producers, and show cohesion amongst livestock operators.

I look forward to all these new projects, and welcome your feedback and experiences on the animal welfare component of shearing (and how misconceptions about it may affect you?), on grazing for fire management, and ideas for future Producer Meet-Ups.

Please email me at capellagrazing@gmail.com.