Hi, All:

The summer at my house has been the domain of the rain and the rabbits. I’ve turned under the squash patch and replanted some of the crops that the bunnies devoured the first time around—kale, chard, cilantro—in the hopes that maybe they’ve forgotten about our garden by now. September’s almost upon us, and with it a new season. In traditional agrarian calendars, the name for the month reflects its importance as the time when we begin to enjoy the fruits of the summer’s efforts. The Gaelic name translates as something like ‘the time of plumpness’, and the Welsh name for September means ‘reaping’. In that spirit, some of us have a little harvest of our own coming up. Those of you who’ve been growing flax ought to be pulling it now (not cutting it, since the roots contain useable fiber) and setting it aside someplace to dry. Those of you who’ve been growing Japanese indigo should harvest that too. If you pick only a third of the leaves, your plants may have time to put out another crop of them before the frost comes. You can dry these or just bag them fresh, and, if you’d like to give them to me at the September meeting (or later) I’ll put them together with my own and set them to fermenting (see the article later in the newsletter) so we’ll have a nice ball of composted indigo ready next spring for a workshop on traditional vat dyeing.

I hope to see you in September.

Best,

Wayne
Meeting Minutes from August

Roc Day Vendors: Our Roc Day Coordinator, Yvonne LaMontague, reported, that there had been no new potential vendors interested in vending spots at Roc Day contacting her. Nevertheless, we went ahead with the lottery to choose the seven returning vendors. Those three returning vendors not chosen will be guaranteed spots in 2020. Yvonne will contact both chosen and not chosen vendors. Vendors who haven’t sold for two consecutive years will be considered new vendors. The deadline for new vendor applications had been extended. There is no official form for vendors to fill out. Potential vendors interested in selling at Roc Day are encouraged to contact Yvonne LaMontage directly.

Charlotte Sharky, a former Guild member, appeared at the meeting in order to inquire how to become a new vendor. She sells hardwearing Mohair yarn she hand dyes in many different stunning colors. Most of her customers use her yarn to create cinches (see photo.)

Potential Speaker: We agreed, that it would be interesting to invite Dana to present at one of our Guild meetings. Dana is the founder of LocalFiber NY and organizer of the Meet the Shepherd Talks at the Tompkins County Public Library. Dana since has agreed to come, however can’t fit a visit this year into her busy schedule.

No bus to Rhinebeck: Due to lack of interest and considerable costs of renting a vehicle, there will be no Guild bus going to New York Sheep and Wool Festival.

Example of cinches (to hold the saddle on horses) made from Charlotte’s dyed Mohair yarn. (photo: Wayne Harbert)
Request for Spinners and Weavers at Homestead Heritage Fair Day.
The Dryden Historical Society is looking for volunteers to demonstrate spinning and/or weaving at the Homestead Heritage Fair Day on October 6th. If interested, contact Wayne Harbert or Gina Prentiss.

We Need Items for the Chinese Auction at Roc-Day
Now that summer is over, Roc Day 2019 is just around the corner. Please, consider making some donations of lovely handmade objects for our Chinese Auction. Lynne Anguish will be collecting your works.

Cotton spinners sought for Family Learning Event on September 30th
My name is Raylene Ludgate and my job at Cornell Botanic Gardens is to get kids and their families excited about plants! We hold a big event A family Learning Festival called Judy’s Day this fall on Sunday, Sept 30th, 2018 from 1 to 5pm. The event is outside under tents in the FR Newman Arboretum. This year the theme is Plants Have Families too so the tents are arranged by family! We are featuring the Malvaceae Family in which cotton is a member. So we were wondering if any of your guild members might be interested in spinning cotton as a demonstration at the Festival and talking to people about Cotton.

Raylene Ludgate, Youth Education Coordinator (rgl3@cornell.edu)

MAFA-Newsletter
We are members of the Mid-Atlantic Fiber Association (Mafa). Mafa has their own newsletter, with many links to fiber related events (more than I could fit on the sidebars): September/October Newsletter

Fiber Events and Craft Fairs:

Talk by Florence Feldmann-Wood
Saturday, September 29th, 10am-4pm
Old School Wool and Weaving Center
6337 Academy Street
Truxton, NY 13158
https://oldschoolweaving.com

Judy’s Day
Sunday, September 18th, 1pm-5pm
F.R. Newman Aboretum
Ithaca, NY 14850
https://www.cornellbotanicgardens.org/

Homestead Heritage Fair Day
Saturday, October 6th, 10am-3pm
14 North Street,
Dryden, NY 13053
http://www.ithacaheritage.com

Fall Knitting Train
Saturday, October 13th, 2pm-4pm
Medina Railroad Museum
530 West Avenue
Medina, NY, 14103
https://www.facebook.com/tinaturnerknits/

NY State Sheep and Wool Festival
Saturday, October 20th, 9am-5pm, and Sunday, October 21st, 9am-4pm
Dutchess County Fairgrounds,
6550 Spring Brook Avenue,
Rhinebeck, NY 12572
https://www.sheepandwool.com/

The Fiber Festival of New England
Saturday, November 3rd, 9am-5pm, and Sunday, November 4th, 9am-3pm.
Mallary Complex at Eastern States Exposition,
1305 Memorial Avenue,
West Springfield, MA 01089
https://www.easternstatesexposition.com/p/fiberfestival
So You’ve Grown Some Japanese Indigo: Now What?

by Wayne

I’ve heard reports that some of the Japanese Indigo seeds I handed out at the beginning of summer have turned into plants. As I mentioned, my own plantings yielded variable results. The ones I put in pots on the patio ended up much more robust than the ones I set out in the dyers garden. So from now on they’ll be patio plants. I plan on taking my first harvest this weekend. If you only pick a third of the leaves at a time, your plants will probably still have time to crank out a second crop before the first frost comes. The good news is that you don’t have to use them as soon as you pick them; you can save them up. Some recipes (like the one in Rita Buchanan’s book) call for fresh leaves, but you can compost them instead, or dry them and set them aside. The active ingredient is very stable, and you can save them up and use them at your leisure.

Indigo dyeing is wrapped in layer upon layer of historical, cultural, botanical, and biochemical wonder. Botanically, the active ingredient that yields its inimitable shades is not found in just a single plant, but in dozens of them, belonging to at least five separate botanical families scattered, literally, across all continents, as if providence intended that everyone should enjoy those marvelous hues. By way of other indigo wonders, it turns out that none of those plants actually contains the indigo chemical whose shades we see. They contain only its colorless precursors, which turn into a blue dye only after a complex process which starts by crushing the plant and soaking it in water, releasing enzymes within the plant that convert those indigo precursors into yet another precursor. This one in turn will yield indigo when exposed to oxygen, but let’s not get ahead of ourselves; for all its lovely blueness, indigo is a very poor dye because it is insoluble in water, so it can’t penetrate the fiber in order to impart its hue. We need to keep the colorless, not-quite-indigo (which is soluble) from turning into indigo before the fiber has had a chance to absorb it. (Or, if it’s already been converted into indigo, we need to change it back into not-quite-indigo). How? By starving it of oxygen, of course. If only we had something at hand that could gobble up all the oxygen in the water… Nature once again provides; there are in fact bacteria waiting in the wings who are perfectly happy to do that chore for us, if we provide them with an invitingly warm bath (120°F or so), keep adding an alkaline material (like potash) to it to neutralize the acids they produce so they won’t die of their own waste, and let them work. You can tell that your warm, alkaline, water, bacteria, and wanna-be indigo soup is ready to go when it turns pale yellow-green with a coppery film, and froths blue when you stir it. Then you throw in your fiber and let it stew until it’s had its fill. As you pull it from the solution and expose it to air, the not-quite-indigo that suffuses the fibers turns blue before your eyes. This is the most striking of all the indigo wonders, but perhaps not the biggest one. Consider this; the process, as I’ve described it in this sketchy, bare-bones way, is neither easy nor obvious. It involves an intricate and exacting chemistry still not understood in all its detail by modern science. Yet millennia ago, culture after culture around the world discovered these plants and their hidden virtues, and brought to bear their powers of observation, their experimental spirit, their ingenuity and persistence, in mastering the elaborate process and building around it one of the earliest domestic crafts and perhaps the world’s first organic chemical industry. Now there’s a wonder.
Nowadays indigo dyeing is usually done with the aid of commercial chemicals, which speed up the process but are unpleasant to work with, not to mention nontraditional. I’d much rather experiment with traditional methods. So, here’s an idea; if you are interested, you can bring me your Japanese indigo leaves (dried or fresh) at one of our meetings between now and the end of fall. I will combine them all and process them, using a technique common to both the British tradition for handling woad and the Japanese traditional treatment of Japanese indigo: the leaves are composted (couched), formed into a ball (called sukumo in Japanese), and dried. In this state, they can be stored for a long time, and ground to a powder for use in a dyeing vat as needed. We can plan on a little workshop on dyeing sometime in the spring, bring our fiber, invite some of our microbial friends, and whip up a batch of blue stew (at my house, rather than our usual meeting space, since the vat needs to mature for more than a day). We can work out the details later.
Membership Form

Please type or print

Date: _________________________

Name____________________________________________________
Address:_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
Preferred email: PRINT NEATLY _________________________________________________
Phone # __________________________________________________________

This information will be shared with registered guild members. If you wish to remain anonymous, please let Louise Henrie know.

Please list your wheel(s) __________________________________________________________

Do you spindle spin? Yes or No (circle)

Do you Knit? Weave? Crochet? Dye? (Natural or Chemical?):

Would you be willing to share your skills with other members (ie: teach beginners, present a meeting topic, demo to the public, etc?)

If you raise fiber animals, please list them here__________________________________________

We need your help on committee(s). If you would like to volunteer, let our president, Wayne Harbert, know!!!

Roc Day
Programming
Newsletter
Membership
Website
Outreach
Treasurer

Our newsletter is distributed electronically. If this is a problem, please contact Angelika St.Laurent. Please fill this out and either bring it to a meeting or mail it with your check for $20 to: Louise Henrie, 417 2nd Street, Ithaca, NY 14850
Handmade Glass Whorls
Buttons, Pins & Beads
by Isinglass Design
glass whorls for
medieval & viking
inspired spindles
www.glassbead.etsy.com
facebook.com/glassbeadstudio

Hand Dyed Fiber & Yarn
Hand Crafted Spindles & Stools
Patterns, Kits, Accessories
www.spinningbunny.com
www.etsy.com/shop/spinningbunny
607-227-1216
311B Tupper Rd, W. Danby, NY 14883

To place an ad
The cost for ads is $5.00 per month for non-members. Current members may submit one business-card sized classified ad per month for free. Send a check made out to BSHG to our treasurer, Louise Henrie, 417 2nd Street, Ithaca, NY 14850. Send the ad in digital form to the newsletter editor, angelika@simonstl.com. Business cards are published free for current members.