

Black Sheep Handspinners Guild Newsletter

November 2009

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<http://www.blacksheephandspinnersguild.org>

The Black Sheep meet from 11am-3pm on the second Saturday of the month, locations to be announced.

We are meeting at the All Saint's Church in Lansing, across from the Lansing Schools, from 11AM to 3PM, November 14, 2009 .

NOTE THE LOCATION CHANGE!

Dues for 2010 are \$20.00 Either cash or checks are good – Sharon Gombas will collect dues.

From the State Fair

Sent in by Anne Furman

Sharon Gombas and Sue Quick, two of our 2009 New York State Fair winners, brought in their winning entries to the October meeting. That is a felted scarf, felted rug, and two beautiful skeins from Sharon on the left. On the right is Sue's knit pillow cover and winning skeins. More encouragement for the rest of to think of getting ready for next year.



President's Message

Jim Johnson

I am excited by the work that the Roc Day committee has been doing to bring us another wonderful event on Jan 9, 2010. Please keep that day on your calendar and I encourage everyone to invite at least 3 friends to Roc Day.

There are going to be vendors, games, classes and of course the raffle and the auction. If each of us brings in something for the auction it will be an even more successful than in past years. So get busy spinning, knitting or whatever so that we can have a great selection of items.

Guild Agenda November 14

1. Introductions
2. Show & Tell Table
3. Reports
 - a. Library discussion
 - b. Roc Day volunteers
 - c. December Meeting
4. Announcements
5. New Business
6. Guild and non guild Announcements

Meddling with Nettles

Wayne Harbert

As the "The International Year of Natural Fibers" draws to a close, I thought I would commemorate its passing by giving a little report on my experiments with one of the (perhaps deservedly) lesser known fiber plants--stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*). I had planted my nettles as a dye plant, but then I encountered occasional mentions of the possibility of gathering fiber from them. Encouraged by the near success of the faithful sister in the Hans Christian Andersen story, I set out to determine whether this was something that only came true in fairy tales.

I can report, first of all, that there really is fiber in them. Moreover, it is just under the epidermis. After that outer layer has rotted away on your lawn for a month the fiber is conveniently arrayed along outside of the stalks and can be peeled off by hand. (By that time they've lost their sting.) For some reason, skinnier stalks seem to have more than the thick ones.

On the basis of my research, I can also offer some advice for others who may wish to try it. The first piece of advice is: when harvesting stinging nettles for fiber, don't do so barefoot. The second piece of advice is: don't bother harvesting stinging nettles for fiber. The yield is disappointingly meager, and my experience suggests that it would take great quantities of nettles, time and patience to gather and clean a usable amount. The sister of the eleven enchanted princes in Andersen's story was very loyal indeed! I'm not the only one to experiment with fiber extraction from nettles, judging by my handful of Google hits, but I encountered no reports of

resounding success in their backyard cultivation for that purpose. They have been grown commercially for their fiber at various points in history though, and there are currently some efforts at reviving the large scale production of nettle fiber as a more environmentally friendly substitute for cotton. You can even buy clothing, including some high-fashion articles, made from them. Stinging nettle has a cousin, ramie, a stingless nettle of Asia, which is commercially available as a fiber--a beautiful, shining white, silken fiber, but very difficult to process, and stiff and somewhat brittle because of its crystalline composition, so cloth made from it doesn't take well to repeated folding.

They still don't know exactly what makes stinging nettles sting. Some of them sting worse than others. One variety in New Zealand, ongaonga or tree nettle (*Urtica ferox*), is so toxic that it has killed horses and people who've encountered it. Charles Dickens, in his weekly journal *Household Words* for the week of August 21, 1859, tells us about another relative, "that venomous daoun setan, or devil's leaf of Timor" [*Urtica urentissima*, apparently—WEH], which "stings men to death like a prickly bunch of serpents." Survivors are said to suffer symptoms like lockjaw that can last for weeks. The quote from Dickens' journal occurs in an article entitled "Our Vegetable Friends," by the way. With friends like those... Still, some people grow ongaonga on purpose as a butterfly plant in New Zealand, where they are the preferred repast of Red Admiral butterflies, so I guess they are in fact friendly vegetables to some. And I find myself wondering if anyone has ever tried to extract fiber from good old devil's leaf. We may never know.

Notes from the Roc Day Committee

Susan Sarabasha

[Jim noted that he doesn't have a volunteer to chair this committee, so he's doing it. -Ed.]

- Carol reported than vendor intro and application letters had been sent out. At the time of the meeting 9 reservations had been made.
- After jurying on 11/18, final letters, a map and guidelines will be mailed. We have room for 5 large and 5 small vendor spaces.
- Susan handed out copies of the floor plans -- Vendor/spinning space plus workshop, eating and bathroom space. Thanks to Sharon for doing the measuring.
- Spinning Games - 1 Fun, 1 Skill leader and judge TBA
- Workshops: 11 - 12:30 and 1 - 2:30 with Auctions between and after.
 - 2 Drop Spindle Sessions AM (?) and PM (Teresa P)
 - Entrelac Knitting AM (Sandra) Entrelac Crocheting (Char?) PM
 - Cane Bead Felting AM (Sharon) Combing Fibers PM (Marjorie)
 - Kid's Stuff AM (Wayne and Ruth)

- Wayne reported that all the magazines we discussed now have the Roc Day info.
- We also spoke about a bit of paid print advertising locally.
- November guild meeting will begin sign-ups for volunteer jobs.
- Next Committee meeting, upstairs at Wegmans, 5:45 November 18th. All are welcome.

Editor's Notes

Marianne Pelletier

Marjorie forwarded to me the link to the women's retreat center that she mentioned at our October spin-in: www.wiawaka.org.

Bob Garrison (e-mail rgarrison7@frontiernet.net) asked if any spinners can help him figure out how to use his crop of black walnuts. Having not finding a way to break mine open without using a heavy hammer that sent most of the nut skittering across my workroom, I got nothin'. Bob lives in Spencer: 607-589-6805.

From Sheila Grant, who works with Marianne at Cornell, "I have 15 lbs. of Samoyed fur that I've collected over the years that I would like to have cleaned and spun so that I can knit an afghan as a keepsake of my dogs. Any leads you have in identifying someone who can/willing to do this would be greatly appreciated." She gives her contact information and notes that the dog hair is off white. Cell: 592.4648 E-mail: sbgs25@hotmail.com

Upcoming Events

Marianne thanks Knitter's Review for most of these listings.

Knittreat

November 5-8, Bedford Springs Resort, Bedford Springs, PA
http://www.knittersreview.com/upcoming_events.asp

Knitting, Yoga & Meditation: A Knitting Retreat

Ohm. November 6-8, Sky Meadow Retreat Center, Stannard, VT:
<http://www.coolmoon yoga.com/Workshops.html>.
The ad says, "Not too tight, not too loose."

Fall Fiber Fling

November 6-8

The Canyon Country Fiber Arts Guild announces their first Fall Fiber Fling. It will be held November 6 - 8 on the grounds of the Historic Coach Stop Inn near Wellsboro, PA. The weekend will kick off Friday evening with a free lecture by Phylleri Ball on Natural Dyeing. All day Saturday there will be workshops available as well as a gathering room for those who just want to spin or knit. Sunday morning there will also be workshops available. There are also hikes, horseback riding and a covered wagon ride available. There will be vendors on Saturday and Sunday. Saturday night will finish with a Chinese Auction!

Please visit our website <http://www.fallfiberfrolic.com> and feel free to distribute the attached brochure.

Charity Knitting Convergence

November 7. A bunch of people get together and fight over who's most charitable.
The Hut, Pineville, NC: <http://www.rainydaycreationsinc.com/nativity.html>

Hawaii Knitting Cruise with Joan Schrouder and Judy Pascale

Why go swimming in your bathing suit when you can knit wool all day on the boat? November 7-22, round trip from San Diego:

http://www.craftcruises.com/cruise.php?brand=Knitting%20Cruises&cruise_name=Circle%20Hawaii&cruise_line=Holland%20America%20Line&cruise_ship=ms%20Zaandam&dep_date=2009-11-07&cruise=18&a_aid=R0906-U22427

In Ithaca! Greater Appalachian Llama and Alpaca Association

November 12-15, Clarion Hotel, Ithaca: <http://www.galaonline.org/conference.htm>

Lake Country Spinning & Fiber Artists Festival Show & Sale

Saturday, November 14, 10am - 5pm
Perinton Square Mall
(Corner of Rts 250 & 31)
6720 Pittsford-Palmyra Rd

Fairport, NY 14450

free admission, free parking

Spinning Bunny added a flyer through her web page:

<http://www.spinningbunny.com/images/PerintonShowFlyer.pdf>

Southern Vermont Fiber Event

November 21, Brattleboro, VT. I love the coffee house there with the couch made of nickels.

<http://www.vermontvacation.com/TravelPlanner/ItemDetail.aspx?outsideLink=true&spID=3190>

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Christmas Craft Markets Cruise with Myrna Stahman

Who are these people that the events are named after them?

December 6-12, Nuremburg, Germany and Vienna, Austria. You knit. I'll be eating chocolate and drinking beer.

http://www.craftcruises.com/cruise.php?brand=Knitting%20Cruises&cruise_name=2009%20Danube%20Explorer&cruise_line=Viking%20River%20Cruises&cruise_ship=Viking%20Spirit&date=2009-12-06&cruise=30&a_aid=R0906-U22427

Pittsburgh Knit & Crochet Festival!

Come be our Valentine! We can't wait to have you join us Feb. 13-14, 2010, at the Four Points Sheraton North in Mars, PA. Registration can be found online at www.pghknitandcrochet.com.

Knittreat Update is published by

<http://www.pghknitandcrochet.com>

Pittsburgh Knit & Crochet P.O. Box 7706, Pittsburgh, PA 15215 / (412) 963-7030 We do not share our mailing list with any third party.

North Country Spinners

September 24-26, 2010 Yup, next year

Johnsonburg Presbyterian Center, Johnsonburg, NJ, Warren County.

Located in the northwestern corner of NJ. To locate please click **here**

<http://www.northcountyspinners.org/retreat.htm>

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To place an ad

A check for \$5.00 made to BSHG for an ad to run three times (a year is \$15) should be sent to the current treasurer, Sharon Gombas, 177 Salmon Creek Rd. Lansing, NY 14882. Send the ad to the newsletter editor, Marianne Pelletier, at: fudger28@yahoo.com. If you have a question for her or others, you can email us through the links at the top of the newsletter.

For Sale: Standard Ashford Spinning Wheel (11/09)

Good condition. Call Debbie Hugue at (607) 273-8175

For Sale: Loom, Versatile LeClerc "Mira" Counter Balanced Loom, 42", 4 Harness (11/09)

Very solid. Can be used as a single beam, sectional beam or double beam. No bench but many extras: \$450. Also, antique yarn winder, \$100; 42" shelf for loom, no brackets: \$10. Call Ellie May (607) 272-8224.