

Shuttlecraft Bulletin: Lightweight Wool Fabrics

For this month's article, I am working with the July 1930 Shuttlecraft Bulletin written on light-weight wool fabrics. Since it is October, the month Mary Meigs Atwater dedicated to Christmas weaving, I have included a bit on that topic.

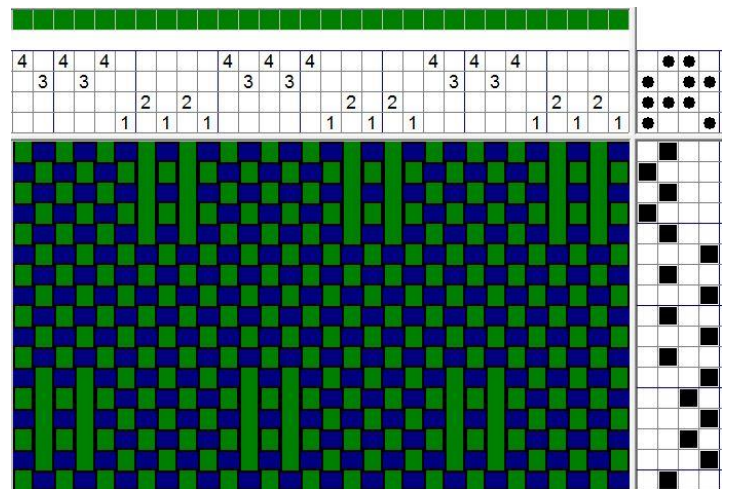
The lightweight wool fabrics Mary wrote about are woven for scarves, sweaters and dresses. Weaving with wool is a different experience if you are accustomed to working with cotton, a less flexible fiber. Wool has more give and one of Mary's Guild members wrote that at least 5" per yard shrinkage must be allowed for in the fabric width and care should be taken in the weaving. She even suggested that it would be better to wind bobbins by hand to lessen the shrinkage. She also recommended weaving with as loose a tension as possible.

For scarves, Mary suggested weaving light square scarves and in stripes of brilliant colors, in plainweave with narrow stripes in twill put in at intervals and on the ends. Weave with a light and even beat. She provided an open weave (or lace) draft, she had written about before and gave a reference to her article on it in another publication, the *Handicrafter*. February 1928, which may be seen on the University of Arizona website:

<https://www2.cs.arizona.edu/patterns/weaving/handicrafter.html>

It is handsome woven in two colors, one color in the warp and another in the weft, see the drawdown figure for the blue and green example.

She continued by writing about crepe fabrics, woven in fine soft wool yarns, with the warp yarn having twist in one direction (for example right hand twist, or Z twist) and the weft yarn twist in the opposite direction (that would be left and twist or S twist). These terms are more familiar to a hand spinner; I'm not sure if these type of yarns are available commercially. The twist of the yarns interact with each other when wet finished and provide a crinkly effect.



She finished the section with advice on wet finishing wool fabrics. She recommended washing in luke-warm mild soap suds and a light. The open weave will not show its pattern until it is wet finished. When reading up on weaving with wool, I found more information on the finishing than anything else. Laura Fry, who has written much on finishing, recommends scouring the fabric with soap and soft water and then fulling it, using a combination of moisture and agitation. She wrote in *Handwoven* (Jan/Feb 2009) that fulling the fabric greatly increases the insulating capacity and changes the wool from rough and stiff to soft and fuzzy.

Mary continued with some words about the Bulletin, stating that it is not a magazine, rather a monthly news letter for our special group of weavers and considered it to be a very definite contribution to our beautiful craft.

Christmas Weaving

By 1930, the October Bulletin has become well established as the Christmas weaving issue, so I thought that it would include be

timely to a bit on that. If you are planning on weaving gifts for Christmas or end of year

holiday season, you should probably be starting that by now, although I am as familiar with the power of procrastination as the next weaver. The list of items Mary includes as appropriate are pretty much the same as those from the 1929 issue: linens, towels, a French laundry cloth which which you may wrap your laundry, table covers, lunch cloths, scarves, chaise lounge blankets, baby

blankets, or floor mats to name a few. She provided a couple of drafts for these articles in monks belt and log cabin. She recommends staying with a simple weave and pattern and avoid weaving pyrotechnics. She also said one interesting thing about what a Christmas (or any gift for that matter) gift should be: It should be not too obviously a thing of utility, but also not a useless piece of junk, classifying somewhere between a sack of potatoes and a pink plush rabbit. And there you have it.

