

February
2014

ROVINS

A Message from the President

Congratulations and a big thank you to all who made our Roc Day celebration the success it was! So many people have contacted us to let us know how much they enjoyed the event.

Audrey has a summer picnic planned for us for our **February** meeting; bring your shades and flip flops, a picnic snack, show and tell items, and be prepared to have fun.

Our **March** program features Lisa Merian and color blending using carders. Fiber will be provided, and we will have both hand and drum carders available for your use. Bring yours along too as I expect there will be more people than carders.

You can start your spring cleaning now, in time for the guild garage sale to be held as part of our **April** meeting. Bring your fiber-related items for sale, exchange, etc.

Our new year is off to a great start! I look forward to seeing you all, and what you have been up to, on the 8th.

Sharon

Roc Day Meeting

There will be a quick meeting of the Roc Day committee, and all interested, at 10:45 prior to the February guild meeting.

Dues are Due!

Membership fees of \$20 are due for 2014. You may bring this to the meeting, or send to Vickie Marsted, 29 Lincoln Avenue, Cortland NY 13045. Checks should be made out to BSHG.

February 8

The February meeting is a summer picnic, so bring your shades and Hawaiian shirts (muumuus too), and a favorite picnic snack.

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P.3 SHODDY GARDENING

P.ROC DAY GALLERY

PP.5-6 Ads

The Black Sheep meet from 11am - 3pm on the 2nd Saturday of each month at All Saints Church Parish Hall, Route 34B, in Lansing, NY.

The Raffles



The Roc Day raffles were a great success. The Guild was able to send \$450 to Hospicare from receipts for the member-made shawl created in memory of Ruth. (The lucky winner was Rosane Mordt, who is shown here modeling the shawl.) Participation in the Chinese Auction was also high. Ellie reports that this was the last one she will be organizing, and we extend to her our boundless gratitude for her sterling leadership over the years.



There's still a textile industry in the northeast

Sharon has forwarded this hopeful link...

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/12/magazine/fruits-of-the-loom.html?_r=1

Fibery Events

Winter Recess Fiber Arts Festival hosted by La Tourelle Resort 1150 Danby Road Ithaca. Monday Feb 17, 10-4. Free Admission. Handmade local yarn, fiber and crafts. First 50 teachers with an Ithaca Loves Teachers coupon in a door prize.

We have the Solarium room at Stella Maris in Skaneateles for Friday, Feb. 21 to noon Sunday, Feb. 23. You can also come just Saturday. Seventeen signed up so far four for Saturday, February 22nd, and thirteen for the whole weekend, February 21st to February 23rd. Cost for the single day is \$35 and for the weekend \$150. To add your name for the retreat or if you know you have signed up but haven't received an acknowledgement by the end of November, please email Anne Furman at ahfurman@yahoo.com.

If the guild approves, we are buying a pound of carded wool from Lisa Merian for half-price. We will spin it at the retreat and use a triangle loom to weave it into a shawl during 2014. The shawl will be raffled at Roc Day 2015.

Editor's Corner: A shoddy way to treat your rhubarb

A few years ago, finding myself in possession of some old, filthy fleece whose grease had fossilized into something akin to varnish, I piled it on a corner of the garden as mulch. It languished there for a couple of years as an ugly felted mat that I occasionally moved from one patch to another before it finally disappeared. I never bothered to wonder where it had gotten off to; chipmunks and birds may have secreted it away by the mouth- or beakful for nests, for all I knew. I make no claim to originality in this; I've learned that others have happened onto the same solution to this particular waste disposal problem, and it seems like such a natural thing to try that I suspect it's occurred to most other modern spinners and shepherds who also happen to garden. It turns out, in fact, that we've all been following in the footsteps of a tradition centuries-old, and one which has recently become the focus of renewed agronomic interest. Last May, Ruth Allen wrote to tell me that she'd seen a BBC special about rhubarb raising in Yorkshire, England (you've got to love the BBC), whose contents, she thought, might make an interesting item for a 'strange fiber facts' section of our newsletter. It seems that rhubarb is one of the things that Yorkshire--in particular, the "Rhubarb Triangle" between Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield—is famous for. Yorkshire rhubarb has been accorded Protected Designation of Origin status by the European Union, just like champagne in western France. Its superior quality is attributed in part to pampering, including forcing it to maturity in the darkness of large sheds to enhance its sweetness, but partly as well to the fertilizer lavished on it. The fertilizer of choice, as it turns out, is the waste product of another of Yorkshire's claims to fame. For generations, some growers have relied exclusively on waste wool from local mills. Wool does, after all, break down in the field and garden, ever so slowly, offering an abundance of nitrogen all the while to the ever-hungry rhubarb, and doing double duty as a mulch in the meantime.

The wool waste applied to this purpose is known in Yorkshire as "shoddy," and a quotation from 1857 in the *Oxford English Dictionary* under that heading mentions its agricultural use: "the dirt and grease from the fleece when washed [is] called in the factories 'mouts'; the entire substance that falls on the floor being called 'shoddy', or 'food', and being sold at a high rate for top-dressing grass land."

'Shoddy' has acquired other meanings. As a noun, it also means a type of yarn made from scraps and trimmings of wool cloth, or inferior varieties of coal. As an adjective, it has come to mean anything of poor quality or workmanship. The meanings related to waste fiber, though, were the first to appear in print, suggesting that they were the original ones. No one is sure where the word comes from ultimately, but supposing that it originally applied to by-products of wool, it may be related to 'shed'.

The venerable idea of wool as mulch and fertilizer has received renewed attention by agronomists in very recent times. A 2011 study at the University of Rhode Island has found that crops mulched with wool waste required less water than others, since the wool keeps the captured water in a condition readily available to the plants. Another 2013 study, at West Virginia University, showed that waste wool compared favorably as a mulch on tomato plants with living clover mulch and coco hull mulch; while it was less effective in suppressing weeds than the other options, the plots mulched with the waste wool yielded significantly larger crops. Experiments with another wool batt product have shown it to be particularly successful as a labor-saving mulch in strawberry cultivation. Not too shoddy after all. Commercial preparations of waste wool, in batts and pellets, for use as mulch and fertilizer, are now marketed under trade names like Woolch and Ewemulch, which probably work better in the marketplace than 'Shoddy' would. In the meantime, back in Yorkshire, the long term success of the Rhubarb Triangle seems to be imperiled by the decline of the local woolen industry.

Roc Day Gallery



Some of the winners of the skein competition



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