

# Silk Tidings

## Greetings from Salt Spring Island

It is glorious indeed when the day is warm and light enough to pot up the tomato, eggplant and pepper plants into larger pots after work. It was a long and cold winter for us but it appears spring is definitely here with nesting swallows, sweet scents wafting through the air, green leaves popping out and flowering bulbs and shrubs making one feel absolutely giddy.

The news media is full of doom and gloom stories about the economy which is helping us all make wiser choices about our spending. In addition, we are fortunate that, as fibre artists and craftspeople, we have the joy and ability to use our hands

and creativity to bring forth another reality involving beauty and usefulness. I am sure you all share with me a great sense of resourcefulness, accomplishment and connectedness when working on your projects. These positive attributes will help us all remember to appreciate the simple things of life.

We have some beautiful new silk roving colours in the Salt Spring Island Series and new scarf kit as well as yarn and fibre specials to help you plan for your summer projects.

*Continued on page 2*



*House with last coat of plaster and pigment colouring*

## Silkster's Gallery

We have a new on-line gallery of extra-ordinary work to delight your senses and soul. Please take the time to have a look! Thank you to the artists for sharing a bit of themselves with us. [www.treenwaysilks.com/gallery.html](http://www.treenwaysilks.com/gallery.html)

**Jean Bair** of Petawawa, Ontario, made a very handsome and special jacket for her sweetie's 75th birthday.

**Lorraine Cockle** from Calgary, Alberta, has sent us some very creative work from an Altered States Playshop she hosted with Sandra Niedermier.

**Margaret Humphries** of Fort Worth, Texas, strayed from her usual silk scarves to construct structural forms using the play of light and shadow in the pattern to her advantage.

**Bobbie Kelstein** from Ashville, North Carolina, weaves Tallitot (Jewish

Prayer shawls) and wants her clients to feel as though "wrapped in the light of prayer."

**Jean Korus** of Moscow, Idaho, designed and wove an exquisite scarf with wild muga silk and 20/2 silk.

**Nancy McElroy** from Calgary, Alberta, used silk fusion for some very diverse projects.

**Haydee McFarland** of Brampton, Ontario, used silk fusion and cobweb felt to create a sculptural "lamp" called Faerie Light.

**Debbie Tyson** from Calgary, Alberta, collaborated with her poet sister



*by Margaret Humphries*

### Call for Entries

Our next Silkster's Gallery will be in our September issue. We encourage all of you to send photos of your work using Treenway silks. It is fun and inspirational for all of us to see what unique work is being produced. We reward you for your time with silk product from Treenway.

See our web site for details of what we require from you to participate in this exciting gallery. We so look forward to your entries. [www.treenwaysilks.com/gallery.html](http://www.treenwaysilks.com/gallery.html)

to make the silk fusion covers for the chapbook *sleepwalker*.

**Els van Dam** from Mill Bay, British Columbia, used many shades she obtained from dyeing only with Brazil wood to make two gorgeous shawls.

Treenway Silks is located at 501 Musgrave Road, Salt Spring Island, BC, Canada, V8K 1V5. You can reach us toll free at **1.888.383.SILK (7455)** or at 250.653.2345 or by fax at 250.653.2347. Email us at [info@treenwaysilks.com](mailto:info@treenwaysilks.com). See our website [www.treenwaysilks.com](http://www.treenwaysilks.com).

continued....

## Greetings from Salt Spring Island



Wool insulation in the ceiling

### Clay/Straw House

Despite the cold, it was a productive winter working on the house. The plumbing was finished, inspected and passed; good job Terry! He was also the electrician with all the wires in the last newsletter. Mike and Silas put the cedar siding on the outside in the few places that were not plastered. The different lines and textures are giving the outside a much more interesting look. We still have some rockwork to put on the outside below the plaster and above the earth. This will help to keep the earthen plaster dry.

This week the interior walls will be complete. It is a totally different reality having to walk around walls instead of through them. I am a visual person and I am finally getting the "feel" for the intimacy of each room.

Terry has been making the masonry stove that will heat the house along with in-floor heating. He is working on the chimney right now. Then the fun starts with putting the rock on the outside.

Mike and Silas will start the pine tongue and groove ceiling next week and then we will finish the final plaster on the inside walls. The walls will be coloured with earth pigments. I am having a hard time making up my mind about colour. I love everything I have experimented with on my sample boards.

It is at the exciting stage now but we just look at one day at a time. Our motto is: it is finished when it is finished. We do not like to set arbitrary deadlines.

### Meeting Barbara Conway

Last September we traveled with our friends to the Maritimes (the eastern provinces of Canada). It was a great adventure and we particularly enjoyed stopping in to visit some of our long-time customers. We had been phone acquaintances for many years and it was great to



Annie found a wool insulation mat very quickly.

see their smiling faces and their places of business.

Barbara Conway lives in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and has been a customer since we were operating Treenway out of Terry's parent's basement, some 25 or 30 years ago. Barbara has always written letters and sent blank cheques and asked us to send her some nice wool. In one of her last letters to us, she explained she had no phone, email or credit card and that is why she always did her business by mail. She also mentioned she lived in a cabin in the middle of nowhere and was in her 80s. As our travels took us to Antigonish, we decided to take a chance and popped in for a visit. When we introduced ourselves, Barbara jumped out of her chair with her arms wide open and we sat and chatted like old friends after warm hugs.

She is an amazing 87 year old woman, living in her cozy one room cabin with baskets of handspun wool and partially knit projects as her companions. She grew up in England and, as a young girl, told everyone she was going to live in Canada. She left England as a young woman and has lived a pioneering lifestyle ever since. She swims in the ocean nearly every day in the summer and snowshoes in and out of her cabin in the winter. It was very heart warming and exhilarating to meet such an independent spirit as Barbara.



Karen and Terry with Barbara at her home

# News

## Kongthong coming for a visit

**Friday & Saturday, June 12 & 13**

Folk Art Gallery, San Rafael, CA

**Sunday, June 21st, 2-5pm**

Orange Hall at 1620 Fernwood Road in Victoria, BC

**Thursday, June 25th, 7:30-10:30pm**

Maiwa Handprints on Granville Island, Vancouver, BC

I have been fortunate to travel to other countries and make friends with weavers in different parts of the world. Kongthong and her sister, Viengkam, are two such friends from Laos. Kongthong will be coming for a visit in June. She will bring the exquisite silk weavings produced throughout Laos for their business,



*Kongthong in Phaeng Mai Gallery, Vientiane, Laos*

Phaeng Mai Gallery. The gallery teaches Lao women the art of natural dyeing and silk weaving as well as markets their stunning cloth worldwide.

Kongthong will give a short slide presentation about their work, the importance of weaving to Lao women and the meaning of the patterns woven into the cloth. Kongthong, her sister and two brothers

were all put through university by the weaving of their widowed mother. Eventually they all returned to Laos to create Phaeng Mai Gallery to help preserve the weaving tradition and help other women make a better living. There will be beautiful silk items for sale and an opportunity to chat with Kongthong.

Please come and join us for one of these special events and meet one of the sweetest ambassadors of the world.



*Selection of Phaeng Mai handwoven silk scarves and shawls.*

## International Year of Natural Fibres

**Don't forget to get involved!**

We talked about the importance of 2009 to natural fibres in our last newsletter. Since that time, I have been intrigued to see the different projects and events guilds and other groups are organizing for public awareness.

Here on Salt Spring Island we have an amazing Saturday market displaying an irresistible array of food and crafts produced by local artisans. Treenway Silks is collaborating with our local guild to set up a simple Saori or rigid heddle loom at the market for people to try their hand at weaving. This will help promote con-



versation about the sustainability of all natural fibres and how important they are to farmers and those of us who want to be aware of what we put on our bodies.

We will have a donation jar there so people can contribute to one of the programs to help someone in a poorer country purchase a sheep. This is part of the Keep the Fleece program put on by Wild Fibres magazine. It is a good way to get a group enthused about the education of natural fibres. More information is available at [www.keepthefleece.org](http://www.keepthefleece.org)

# New Products

## Salt Spring Island Series

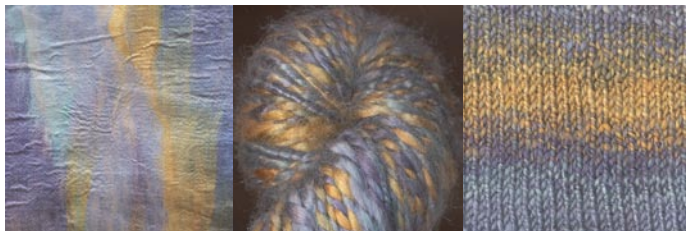
We have added four new colourways to our popular hand painted tussah sliver, the Salt Spring Island Series. Our community and landscape are very dear to all of our hearts. One might describe our feeling for this place on the planet as a love affair. We draw on its beauty and community spirit for the inspiration of the colourful fibre.

Treenway and our dyers, Cheryl, Mary and Charlene, are delighted to bring you Creekside Can Can, Beddis Bosa Nova, Morningside Mambo and Rainbow Road Rock. View these colour combinations on our website at [www.treenwaysilks.com/ssi\\_series.html](http://www.treenwaysilks.com/ssi_series.html).

The Salt Spring Island Series silk fibre is perfect for spinning, silk fusion, needle felting and all fibre arts. It is packaged in two sizes: 25g (approx. 0.9oz) and 50g (approx. 1.8oz).

The price for 25g is \$9.70 each or \$9.20 each for three or more. The 50g packages are \$18 each.

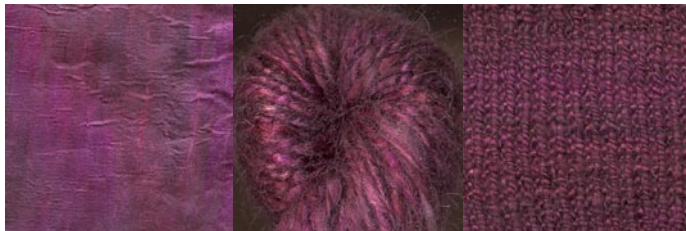
### Morningside Mambo



### Beddis Bosa Nova



### Creekside Can Can



### Rainbow Road Rock



Left to right: silk fusion, hand spun and hand knit samples

## Natural by Nature Scarf Kit

### 8 Shaft

Our new scarf kit utilizes the different natural colours, textures and sheen of the wild silks, muga and tussah, as well as reeled, spun and noil yarns of the domesticated white Bombyx mori silk.

Natural by Nature is a perfect opportunity to acquaint yourself with the different hand and action of each yarn. This a good project to get started working with silk and multi-shafts to weave two distinguished scarves.

The kit contains a pre-wound warp long enough to weave two scarves approx 6 1/2" wide by 72" long at a sett of 30 EPI. The weft yarn along with complete warping and weaving instructions are included in the gift box. \$86.00

Please see the May/June 2009 issue of *Handwoven* magazine for a photo and more detailed information.



[www.interweave.com](http://www.interweave.com)



Top to bottom:  
noil, reeled, muga, spun and tussah silk yarns

# Specials

## 2P Reeled Silk Yarn

Our factory helped us design this lustrous white reeled silk yarn. The weight is similar to our 20/2 spun silk and the yarn twist is not too tight and not too loose. Reeled silk does not pill readily. This yarn looks beautiful on its own and mixes nicely with many of our other yarns to make lovely clothing.

Reeled silk is slippery and requires special handling. A ball winder should not be used because the yarn will slip off, even if wound onto a cardboard tube, making a tangled mess. Wind the balls by hand, or better still, wind your warp and shuttle directly from the skein placed on a yarn holder (swift). It is best to clamp the swift sideways and bypass the ball stage, saving time and tangle, no matter what type of yarn you are working with.

The 2P yarn has approx 4,700 yd/lb (9,400 m/kg). The average skein weight is 80g (2.8 oz). We are offering a 20% discount.

Regular Price: \$19.50 Cdn / 80g skein.

**Sale Price: \$15.60 / 80g** (approx. \$12.50 US / 2.8oz)



Warp: 2P  
Weft: 20/2 Spun Silk (top);  
2P (bottom)  
4 Shaft Twill, 28 EPI



## Silk/Camel Fibre

### 100g packages

The majority of camel hair comes from the two-humped Bactrian variety, which survives in extremely cold climates. Camel hair is comprised of two qualities: relatively coarse outer hair and inner down fibre. The longer hair is used in making felt for Mongolian yurts. Shearing, combing or collecting the hair shed during molting season are different ways of obtaining the fibre. Fibre length is approximately 1-1½ inches with the best coming from Mongolia and Inner Mongolia. An expensive process of separating the long coarse hair from the down, called dehairing, is necessary before spinning yarn.



Bactrian camel, Kölner Zoo,  
Cologne, Germany

The camel down keeps the camel warm so the fibre is lightweight and warm with a nice lustre. Silk lends length, shape retention, sheen and durability to the camel yielding a strong yet soft fibre with a warm tan colour when blended with the silk. This yummy blend is a joy to spin, weave, knit needle felt and create other fibre arts.

As part of our move to change our packaging to smaller sizes, we are offering the 100g package at a 25% discount.

Offer is good only while 100g packages last.

Regular price: \$28.00 Cdn / 100g

**Sale Price: \$21.00 / 100g** (approx \$16.80 US / 3.5oz)

### NOTE

1. Prices do not include shipping.
2. Specials end August 31st, 2009.
3. Regular 10% Discount: Our normal Bulk Discount for orders of silk yarns and fibres over \$150.00 CDN does not apply to Specials items.

### Remember

All prices are in Canadian funds.  
Approximate exchange rate: \$1.25 Cdn = \$1 US

### Web Specials

In addition to our newsletter specials, we have specials on our web site. We notify everyone on our email list each time we post new specials. You can also check our web site periodically. See the Specials button in the drop-down menu or go to [www.treenwaysilks.com/sale.html](http://www.treenwaysilks.com/sale.html).

If you would like to be added to this list, please send us your full name and email address to [info@treenwaysilks.com](mailto:info@treenwaysilks.com). Please add us to your address book to ensure you receive our emails.

# Asian Journal

Our last newsletter gave a brief introduction to the three types of wild silk we visited in the fall of 2007. The stories of the caterpillars, moths and caregivers are captivating, complex and heartwarming. We will paint a more in depth image of each of these fascinating wild things, starting with the most well known, tussah. In India this silk is referred to as **tasar** from the Sanskrit word *trasara* meaning shuttle.



## Tropical Tussah (tasar), *Antheraea mylita* Orissa and Chhattisgarh, India

All silkworms pass through the same four phases: egg, larva or caterpillar, pupa (the cocoon forming stage when silk is produced) and moth. The number of days it spends in each phase depends on the variety and on the season and is also affected by temperature, humidity, sunlight and rainfall. The four phases require different tending, which the caregivers accommodate in a variety of ways.

### 1. Egg

Healthy eggs begin the process of successful silk rearing. The Central Silk Board (CSB) provides rearers with disease free layings (DFLs). The CSB is a team of scientists who are dedicated to promoting silk and improving the lives of the caretakers



*Moths emerging from cocoons in mating hut*

and producers of silk. This start with healthy eggs reduces mortality rates through the life cycle, improves the quality of progeny, saves labour and yields increased income.

### 2. Larva or caterpillar

Silkworm larvae shed their skin four times with each non-molting period called an instar. The caterpillars grow enormously between the first and last instars and food consumption varies dramatically at the different instars. The larvae extract amino acids from the leaves they consume and transform them into silk.

### 3. Pupa

The caterpillar spins the cocoon from which silk is derived. The extruded silk consists of two protein components, fibroin and a protective coating called sericin. Within its cocoon, the larva metamorphoses into a pupa. Some pupae remain in their cocoons to mature and provide eggs to produce the next generation. When the pupa becomes a fully formed moth, with wings and antennae, it releases an enzyme which dissolves a hole in the cocoon allowing it to emerge and breed. Reeled silk can only be obtained from undamaged (or unopened) cocoons. To obtain reelable cocoons, the pupae are stifled by means of sun drying or dry hot air. The pupa is a valuable commodity as protein rich food for chickens, ducks, pigs, fish and humans.

### 4. Moth

After mating, the female lays between two hundred and five hundred eggs and the cycle begins again. Moths have no eating or digestive organs and they die shortly (about five to seven days) after the completion of mating and egg laying.

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Very serious Chai walla



Rice harvest

### On the Road in India

November is the month of the rice harvest and weddings. The rice harvest dominated a lot of our visual intake as we journeyed through Orissa and Chhattisgarh, while the weddings assaulted our ears. The rice harvests traveled down the road in all manners: bullock carts piled high and wide, cargo trucks traveling incognito under the stalks of the rice and bicycles carrying yokes of sheaves from the fields. Louder is better for most Indian wedding processions. A bicycle transporting a diesel engine used to power a generator followed a huge float carrying gigantic speakers blaring music as the wedding couple and attendees walked along through the streets. The cities are chaos while the countryside is tranquil. This spread of opposites is the confusing norm of India which was part of our daily lives while there.

India is a huge country with climates as diverse as tropical jungle, dry desert and cold snow capped Himalaya Mountains. Two types of tasar are indigenous here: temperate and tropical. The leaves that feed each type

contain tannin, which gives the silk its grey to honey colour. Wild silks have always been an integral part of the lives of the original peoples, or tribal people as they are called in India. This segment of the population has its own culture and traditions separate from the majority of India. They have also been in the lower section of the economic scale.

### Varieties of Tasar Silkworms

Our first journey out of the capital of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, was with our friendly CSB guide, Dasharti. When we go on the silk road, we stop at a roadside fruit vendor and chai (tea) shop to stock up for the long journey into the tasar forests. There are over 25 different races of tasar in India. Some races give only one crop per year and others produce two or three crops per year.

Due to the weather and humidity, only one crop from the caterpillars that produce three per year is a really good commercial crop. The other two crops produce fewer cocoons with less weight.

Until two to three years ago the natural wild race in Chhattisgarh state accounted for 50% of the cocoon production there. This has now decreased as the forest dwellers were over-harvesting so the population was diminishing in addition to the forests being cut down for farm land. The CSB has set up a core area for these caterpillars so no cocoons can be collected and the race can gain in population.

### Feeding the Tasar Caterpillars

Tasar caterpillars much prefer to eat outside in their food trees with the fresh air and sunshine rather than have their leaves delivered to them. When they are



Rice harvest

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*Common green tasar caterpillar*



*Male and female tasar moth*

ready to spin their cocoon, they like to do that in their food trees as well. Rearers bring completed cocoons indoors for the moth to emerge, mate and lay eggs under a watchful eye but as soon as the eggs hatch, they must be moved outside to the trees for the babies to begin eating.

The Central Silk Board became involved slowly helping the native people with wild silks and now they do not have to travel and are realising a good income from

their endeavours which helps stop migration to urban centres and preserve traditional skills and way of life. They have been experimenting with the major tasar food trees for the commercial crops of cocoons, asan (*Terminalia tomentosa*) and arjun (*Terminalia arjuna*). They are producing seedlings and planting them on acreage, plantation style. This means the silkworm farmers can go the plantations near their home by bicycle or on foot and return home in the evening after dark.

*The next newsletter will complete the lifecycle of the tasar caterpillars.*