

# Silk Tidings

## Greetings from Salt Spring Island

The summer has been very busy and very good on Salt Spring Island. On top of everything that goes on here, we have been building our alternative style house! Since we moved to Salt Spring Island in 2001, we have been living in a small suite we made in one of the horse stalls in the barn that was on our farm property. We have been working towards building this house for six years and it is exciting to see the walls up.

We scheduled June 15-18 for a "wall stomping" party. Our walls are filled with a mix of clay and straw which acts as insulation and a heat sink. In May, we got hundreds of bales of barley straw delivered and we picked up three dump truck loads of clay from Sue's (aka Bootsie) partner's farm. The clay needed hours of grinding to be transformed into powder while the 12" laron trusses were being erected to form the walls. With lots of hard work, incredible help and support from our friends, much ingenuity and some luck, we were ready for all the kind folks who arrived on the Friday morning.

We had a team of people mixing clay and water into a smooth slurry while others fluffed straw into the tumbler. The clay and water mix was added to the tumbler which turned and mixed it all until it came out the other end into a hopper. The hoppers were moved by backhoe to the teams of wall stuffers at the house.

To stuff the wall, a sheet of plywood was attached on the outside and inside of the 12"

wide walls. Feeders pitchforked the clay-straw mixture into the wall trough and stompers walked the mixture into a tight pack and used 2"x4"s to tamp it into corners. When one layer was stomped another piece of plywood was attached and the next section filled and stomped. When it came time for the third piece of plywood, the first piece could be removed — the first section of clay/straw was already solid enough to 'stand' on its own.



Teri getting a ride down from the top of the wall at the end of the day



Sue fluffing the straw to go into the tumbler



Susanna at the wheel of the tractor

Our walls are natural, breathable and made with local materials. They will keep the house cool in the summer and warm in the winter and are filled with the love and care of everyone who came to stomp and mix. How wonderful is that? We had 24 helpers on Friday, 32 on Saturday and 24 on Sunday. We all worked very hard and had lots of laughs at the same time. All that communal energy kept us energized. We made good lunches and dinners to share with our family and friends. Of course, our fabulous island Treenies were there, muddy and happy to help. We are working on getting the roof in place before the deluge of November rains.

On another note, this year we will be attending the **Houston Quilt Festival** in October/November for the first time! We have been preparing since January and are very excited

about our first attendance at this show with 60,000 attendees. We invite everyone to stop by and say hi and see the glorious array of colours and textures in our **booth #1744-46**.

Summer is a time to be outdoors and enjoy the warmth of the sun, fresh food and gatherings with family and friends and to revitalise the creative spirit. I have been working on portable, embellishing work this summer and am almost finished all the projects I began. I will be spending a day in the studio getting more pieces prepared to work on the rest of the summer. We hope your summer has been sunny, full of creative rejuvenation and of course some art work.



Karen & Terry at the end of the wall stomping weekend

# New Products

## Gulf Islands Series

We have put together 17 fabulous colour schemes for our Gulf Islands Series.

Great for all types of embroidery, needle arts, stitching, quilting, embellishing, gift wrapping, tassels, paper arts and more.

Silk adds sheen and elegance to any project! These colourways bring you hidden treasures from the Gulf Islands:

- Blackberry Point
- Breezy Bay
- Captains Passage
- Kingfisher Point
- Poet's Cove
- Rendezvous Island
- Retreat Cove
- Rose Islet
- Rum Island
- Savary Island
- Secret Island
- Spotlight Cove
- Telegraph Harbour
- Tugboat Island
- Tumbo Reef
- Village Bay
- Winter Cove

Each colourway consists of 10 yards of each colour in four different types of silk threads:

- 20/2 Spun Silk Thread (equivalent to #8 perle cotton)
- 6 Strand Floss
- Fine Cord (equivalent to buttonhole twist) and
- 8/2 Reeled Silk Thread (equivalent to #3 perle cotton)

for a total of 40 yards. The 20/2, Fine Cord and 8/2 come in our hand-dyed solid colours and the 6 Strand Floss in one of our variegated Montano Series colourways.

See all the colour palettes on our web site:  
[www.treenwaysilks.com/gulfislands.html](http://www.treenwaysilks.com/gulfislands.html).

The price of each colourful pack is \$12.95 Cdn.



## Silk Fusion Starter Kit

Silk Fusion, or Silk Paper, is an exciting creative process. This unique method bonds silk fibres into a lustrous kind of "felt" which can be gossamer and transparent or thick and opaque as leather. Because the fibres are unspun, silk's rich lustre and texture are captured.

Silk fusion is a perfect canvas for hand or machine stitching, printing, stamping, origami, quilting, jewellery, journal covers, collage, mixed media and on and on.

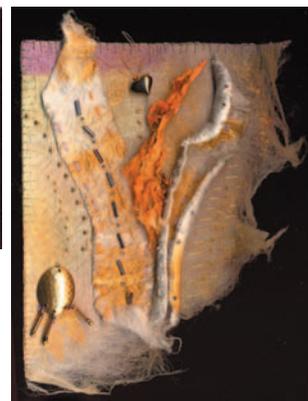
The kit includes:

- 25g Tussah silk fibre
- 2oz Textile Medium
- 18" x 24" screen
- 1" brush
- complete instructions

The Starter Kit, at just \$19.95, is an easy way to get started with silk fusion!



Above: Silk fusion with lace and ribbon embedded and stamped.



Right: Silk fusion base painted with acrylic paint and embellished with silk carrier rods, beads and charms.

# Treenway Challenge

Theme: LIFE Deadline: January 31, 2008

- Categories: 1. Weaving 2. Silk Fusion  
 3. Knitting/Crochet 4. Mixed Media



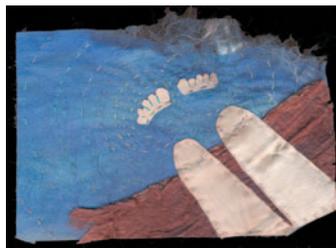
"Forest Dance" by Teri Shaw

### We have a challenge for you!

We love to see how you use Treenway products in your artwork. Interpret the theme as you like. We narrowed the focus for Treenway staff to "Island Life".

All pieces will be posted on our web site and in our newsletter. We will draw one name from each category to receive Treenway product of their choice!

Send us photos or digital files showing us the whole piece and at least one detail shot. If you would like your photos returned, please include your

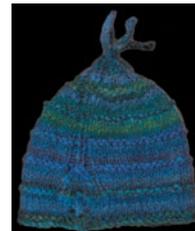


"On the Log at Blackburn Lake" by Sue Earle



Detail from "Low Tide" by Karen Selk

name and mailing address. Your work should not have been published previously.



"Blue Symphony" by Susanna Kong

# Silkster's Gallery

Twice a year we hang a new gallery of inspiring work on our web Silkster's Gallery. Each show is filled with the soul and creative energy of the artists. Our newest show is no different. The work is unique and executed to high standards. Thank you to the artists who have shared their work with us.

**Jackie Erickson-Schweltzer** from Destrehan, Louisiana, knit a stunning adaptable neck and head accessory.

**Marjorie E. Holmes** of Chicago, Illinois, stitched a beautiful sampler.

**Roxan Kinan** from Barbados, West Indies, is molding exquisite sea forms.

**Diane Mercier** of Weaverville, California, created an inspirational project involving 14 handspun and handwoven scarves.

**Lori Scott** from Santa Cruz, California, shibori dyes yarns and exquisite ribbons.

**Susan Shaw** of Millet, Alberta, has created elegant silk fusion bowls.

**Sue Willingham** from Vashon Island, Washington, used a Beijing high rise model as her inspiration for the double weave scarf.



*Silk fusion bowl by Susan Shaw*



*Handmade painted book by Lori Scott*

## Call for Entries

We encourage all of you to send photos of your work using Treenway silks. It is inspiring for all of us and you are rewarded 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.

## Brochure

Susanna has updated our colour luscious brochure which shows off our gorgeous products. Information is provided to find prices on our website.

Please phone or email to ask for these brochures for your classes, conferences, shop or any special event. Available free of charge.



# Specials

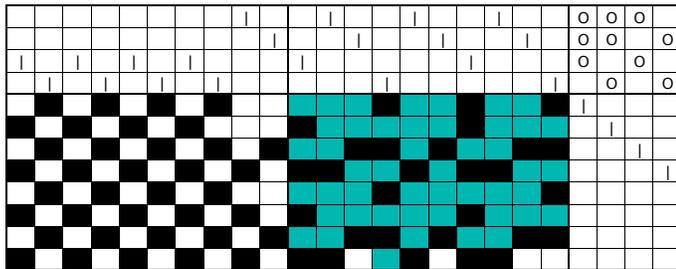
## Medium Cord Reeled Silk Yarn

The medium cord is smooth but has a textural appearance, a lovely sheen and firm twist. It is heavier than most of our silk yarns and on its own it would be sett at about 20 epi for a tabby weave. It is an excellent choice for clothing, altar cloths, tablet weaving, kumihimo or anything that requires a firmer hand with minimal wear from abrasion.



The texture of this yarn adds subtle interest to cloth when it is combined with other yarns. This characteristic makes it a perfect candidate to help use up your stash! A simple threading can give this yarn the lead singer role using a selection of yarns mixed and matched to make plain weave sections with "stripes" of warp faced medium cord scattered in the cloth to provide a prominent shine.

The medium cord will attract more attention if the plain weave areas consist of finer yarns. The heavier cord will seem to rise above the rest of the cloth. For the cord "stripe" to show up best, we suggest that area be sett at 24 epi. The simple threading and treadling below will provide a little warp face stripe for the medium cord.



Plain Weave

Medium Cord Stripe

Yardage: 2,000 yd/lb or 4,020 m/kg (435 yd/100g).

Regular Price: \$27.65 / 100g (approx 3.5 oz) skein

**Sale Price: \$23.50 / skein** Discounted 15%.

### NOTE

1. Prices do not include shipping.
2. Specials end November 30th, 2007.
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.

## Tussah Noil Fibre

Noil fibre consists of the remains from spun silk (the second quality of silk after reeled silk). To prepare silk to be spun, the longest and shiniest fibres are carded and combed leaving the short fibres containing crushed pupa behind. The short fibres and little neps give the noil fibre a nice texture for spinning or silk fusion.

Celia Quinn, our spinning consultant, has given us her suggestions for the best spinning methods using tussah noil fibre. Read her insights on our website: [www.treenwaysilks.com/inout\\_spinning.html](http://www.treenwaysilks.com/inout_spinning.html)

You will see one of Celia's favourite things is to take advantage of the short fibres to make knickerbocker yarn with little 'spots'.

Noil has the strongest silk aroma of all the silks due to the impurities. The majority of the scent dissipates after washing, but can return again when wet.

Available in 100g (3.5oz) packages. Discounted 20%.

Regular Price: \$8.00 / pkg

**Sale Price: \$6.40 / pkg**



## Web Specials

In addition to our newsletter specials, we have changing specials on our web site. We notify everyone on our email list each time we post new specials. You can also check our website periodically. See the Specials button in the drop-down menu or go to <http://www.treenwaysilks.com/sale.html>. If you would like to be added to this list, please send up 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.

### Remember

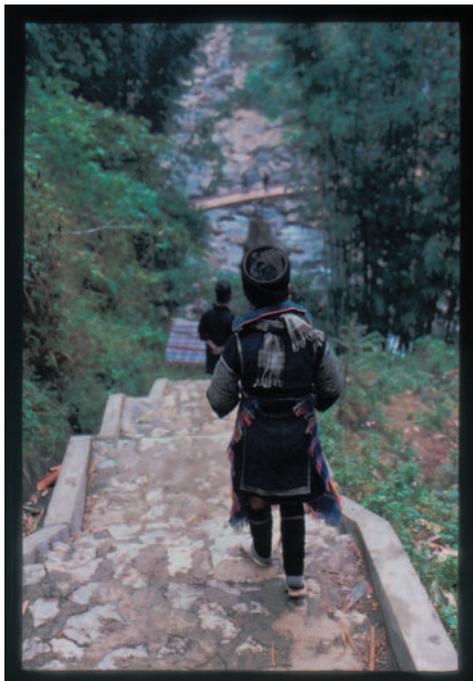
All prices are in Canadian funds. Divide by 1.05 to arrive at the approximate price in US dollars.

# Asian Journal

## Vietnam

### Indigo and Hemp

H'mong people inhabit the Sapa region of Vietnam. They are masters of indigo. We had two days of walking in villages dotted in the mountains and visiting families that worked with indigo to make hemp cloth shiny with wax and indigo or batik designs. A hillside of stone steps worn smooth by many feet coming and going led us to the first household working on their new set of clothes for Tet, the lunar New Year and the biggest festival of Vietnam. There is lots of food, gifts, sets of new clothes and houses repaired for Tet. It is believed the first week of the new year dictates the fortunes for the rest of the year. The H'mong women work all year to provide new clothing for their family members. They grow the hemp, process it, spin it, weave it, dye it, make it shiny, and sew it into an outer vest with a stand up collar to show the lavish embroidery and appliqué. The other items included in their stunning clothing are a jacket with embroidered sleeves worn by women underneath the vest. An embroidered hemp belt with long fringes is tied around the waist. Women wear a type of culottes. Indigo dyed cloth is wrapped around the leg for warmth and protection when working in the field. The hat is a short hollow basket wrapped in indigo to provide warmth in the fog and wind.



We were in Sapa in November. The hemp had been processed and woven. It was being dyed and made shiny. As we carefully descended the stone steps we were above many houses in the village. We could see into the housing courtyards sectioned off for pigs, gardens, processing food and the section that held lengths of freshly dyed fabric draped from bamboo pole

to bamboo pole with chickens and ducks roaming underneath.

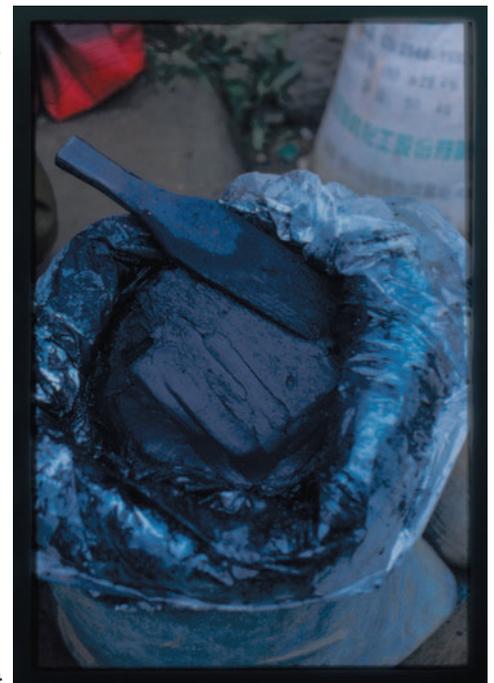
We visited two families renowned for the quality of their work. Four generations live and work together, with the women doing all the textile work while the men work in the fields. The grandmother was weaving nine inch wide hemp cloth, the mother was mixing the indigo and dyeing the cloth and the teenage girls were applying wax to make the cloth shiny. Each of the women had indigo stained hands and embroidered with a cat in their lap between the other tasks.



### Indigo

Most households have indigo planted in a kitchen garden. It is harvested in late spring and made ready for the dyeing season which is August through December. Each family has two indigo vats on the porch. The indigo blue for their clothes is so dark it is almost black. To obtain this shade, the cloth is dipped every day for one month. Indigo becomes darker with each dipping and then hanging to oxidize with the air. Cloth is dipped in the morning and loosely draped

over bamboo poles creating a canopy over the courtyard. It remains all day for the air to work its magic creating deeper shades of blue. The families have 12-22 members per household. Each jacket requires four and a half yards of indigo cloth. This time of year each household courtyard had yards and yards of indigo cloth undulating in the breeze which seemed to fit



the contours of the land and the mist hugging the mountains.

### Shiny Cloth

After 30 days of indigo dips, the cloth is waxed to make it shiny. The shine not only helps to keep the rain off but is beautiful and a part of this community's style.

Beeswax is rubbed on top of a large smooth log and the bottom of a large flat stone. The cloth is laid on the log and the stone set on top of the log and cloth. A younger woman uses the help of the

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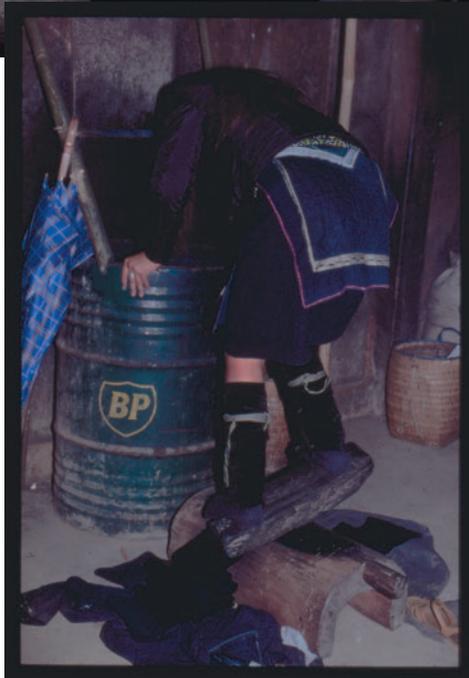


wall or some other stationary object to stabilize her body while placing her feet on either side of the stone. Next she steps from side to side rocking and “walking” the stone over the cloth twice.

Then she tips the rock up while a helper moves the cloth forward for the next walking/waxing. Terry was the helper while I chatted with the other women and took photos. Wax does not have



to be reapplied until approximately 4-5 advancements of the cloth accompanied by rock walking. This process is done twice for each length of cloth. After the cloth is finished waxing, assembly of the jacket begins with a treadle sewing machine and or by hand-sewing. The jacket/vest is made of 4 panels and lined with cotton from the



market. The back panels are sewn together, the front is open and the sides are sewn from arm pit to the waist.

Decorative stitching is done at the bottom, up the front, around the armholes and at the side slit. The collar is highly embroidered to create texture. The H'mong consider themselves strong like a tiger and their embroidery reflects this bold strength.



### Processing Hemp

The following day we headed out by jeep to see the processing of hemp fibre and batik. The jeep took us down the road to a foot bridge. There we started our 9 km walk

or, should I say, to slip and slide through the rice fields to visit a number of households doing traditional textile work.

It rained the night before and the raised mounds of earth between the rice fields were made of clay and became very slippery. We had bamboo sticks to help steady us on our journey through the mist and fog. The old couple in the first home, parents of 12 children, kindly dressed in the garments of the shaman for us. The top layer was the shiny jacket with another, heavily embroidered jacket with sleeves under it.

The hemp is planted in March/April and harvested in July/Au-



continued on page 7



gust. It is pulled from the field to obtain the maximum length of fibre. The strands of fibre are about a metre (a little more than a yard) long. The leaves are stripped from the stalk which is left to dry in the sun for about a week or until completely dry. Each stalk is broken, the "bark" peeled away to reveal eight to twelve strips of fibre. Hemp strips are tied into a bundle and pounded to remove the hard bits of the bark.

Connecting the strips of fibre is a long process. In the fall season, a woman's hands are never idle. We saw women everywhere with hemp fibre wound around their wrists, twisting the lengths of fibre together to make longer and longer balls of yarn. Women were twisting while waiting for a bus, while chatting on the street corner, or waiting to pay for their purchases. The strands of hemp are split at the end of one piece and the beginning of the next piece.



The splits were intersected and the strands twisted to make a continuous yarn.

The lovely couple we visited brought out their equipment to demonstrate the process.



The balls of twisted strands are spun on a foot operated spinning device which was at their daughter-in-law's house. (We saw this little device in the Ethnographic Museum in Hanoi.)

The twisted yarn is wound on a large frame to make a gigantic skein which is then boiled and pounded to make the hemp soft. It is spun again to regain



the twist. The exact process of skein, boil, pound, twist, is repeated two more times. Twisting the yarn is the last process before winding the warp or bobbins.

Before the yarn is spun, boiled and pounded, it is easy to see the twists that hold the strands together.



After the boiling/pounding process, it is very difficult to see where the strands were twisted together, making it strong for a warp yarn.

The looms are very simple two shaft looms made of chunky lumber and bamboo. They are similar in style to the European and North American looms. They are kept in the house because most of the weaving is done during the cold weather.



# The Pulse of Treenway

*We are a busy little operation with many people doing a variety of things to enable us to offer the best products in a friendly, caring and efficient manner. In this issue we would like to introduce you to another of our six amazing dyers.*

## Mary Paddon

We found Mary just before we were leaving Victoria to move to Salt Spring Island. Our dye orders were growing beyond the capabilities of our then, one dyer and having Mary and Cheryl (see issue Sept 2006) on Salt Spring would certainly add to our sense of calm and well-being if we had some rush jobs to ship. Wow, have we expanded since those days!

Mary does all the types of dyeing we do here at Treenway: immersion dyeing in pots to obtain solid colours, hand-painted dyeing on silk rovings for the Salt Spring Island Series, hand-painted ribbons and threads for the Montano Series and the variegated wool rovings. It has taken many hours of designing and experimentation to get the variegated fibres, ribbons and yarns just right and reproducible. Most importantly, it has taken a great deal of communication on just what subtleties we wanted in each colourway.

Mary's work with Treenway started out in the laundry room and corner of her two car garage. The measuring and mixing took place in the laundry room followed by a walk, with the dye solutions in various containers through part of the garden and out a closed gate to the burners and pots in the garage. One very frustrating and hazardous spill at the gate put into motion plans for a new dye shop which now takes up one third of the garage. Not all of that dye solution was lost — it remains at the back of the cupboard for a project 'one day'.

Mary says dyeing is magic – it is part art and part science. It helps to understand the chemistry involved, the math required and the supporting colour theory. But after this you put the yarn in the dyepot and magic happens! When we first asked Mary and Cheryl if they were dyers, they said yes. Now Mary muses, "To become a dyer, you must dye a lot. We have met many problems and solved them. We will continue to meet new problems, but now we have a process to solve them. I am certainly glad Cheryl and I can bounce ideas off each other. Dyeing is a continual exploration. Even when things work, I wonder, but what if..."

Mary's dad was a mining engineer which kept their family on the move while Mary was growing up. When the time for university came they were located in Tennessee so Mary went to the



*Mary sorts a Border Leicester X lamb fleece.*

University of Tennessee in Knoxville. This led to an internship at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts where Mary Francis Davidson introduced her to vegetal dyeing. Mary has a Bachelor of Science in Textile Technology which included everything from fashion merchandizing to chemistry to arts and crafts. She finished the required course work in three years and decided she really enjoyed the weaving, so concentrated on that her last year. She then did a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia, concentrating on fibre arts sculpture.

Mary has an inquisitive mind and is continuing her research and study through a Master Spinner Course at Olds College in Alberta. She enjoys sailing, dyeing, spinning, weaving and constantly observing the colours that surround us. She loves being on Salt Spring Island with her professor husband and two Labrador retrievers, Smiley and Coal.

Mary is very thorough and particular about her work, which makes our job easy and a joy. There are many variables in the dyeing process: both in the preparation and in the dye pot. Mary's capabilities cover such a large scale. She has to be very precise and mathematical to make reproducible colours, which is such an art. In addition, she is an artist with an amazing sense for colour. The variegated fibres, ribbons and yarns that we have designed together require not only technical skill but a "feel" for the proportions, values and undertones. We are thankful for Mary's skill, artistic eye and sense of humour.

## Price Increase

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Most of our products have been given a 5% increase while some items have remained the same. The supply and demand situation of silk, increased shipping charges due to higher fuel costs, higher export duties and changes in currency exchange rates are all factors necessitating the increment.