

Uncommon Threads Resource Guide

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Contact Information:

Felted Pin Cushion

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PRODUCTS USED IN SEGMENT

Carded and Dyed wool (roving)

Sources for natural colored and dyed wool fleece:

Since most people don't have local shops that carry raw wool fleece, do a search online for places to order.

<http://www.yarn.com> (Choose Yarn and Fibers then scroll to spinning fibers)

<http://www.treenwaysilks.com> (Choose Ashford products and spinning)

<http://www.weirdolls.com/roving/rovingdyed.html> (\$2/oz)

<http://www.outbackfibers.com/price/pricelist.htm> (\$4.50 for 2 oz)

If you are not comfortable that you are ordering the right thing, order from a place you can talk to a person and describe what you want to do and make sure you get fleece that will felt for you!

If there is a weaving or spinning guild in your area, check with them as they may have a local source for fleece. (there is a list of local guilds here: <http://www.weavespindye.org>)

Instructions

Segment Title: Felted Pin Cushions

Segment Guest: Lucy W.

Most quilters don't have dyed wool lying around the house. This would be a good project to go in with a couple friends and share the dyed roving and each make your own pin cushion!

I'm sure we've all accidentally shrunk a wool sweater in the wash. So really, we all know what is needed to shrink (i.e. felt) wool: heat, water, and movement. Except for this project, we are going to be doing this on purpose.

Some notes on wool from my spinning/weaving mother:

-Work with clean fleece. If you acquire raw fleece be sure to scour it (that is felting talk for wash thoroughly but gently in hot soapy water) before felting. Check www.interweavepress.com for several good books on spinning with information about processing fleece and dyeing wool fleece.

-If there is a weaving or spinning guild in your area, check with them as they may have a local source for fleece. Local spinners would probably shower you with fleece at you if you asked.

-The breed of sheep's fleece determines how well it will felt. Lincoln Longwool will not felt well but Merino felts very easily. Most fleece will felt, short crimped wool felts much easier than long, lustrous wool. White as well as natural colored (brown and black) will felt

Supplies:

- Approx 4 oz of wool (carded, dyed fleece) – this will give you a medium sized pin cushion. Just add more for a larger one, or less for a smaller one. There is nothing precise about this project!
- A bucket or big mixing bowl
- Hot water
- Rubber gloves (optional)
- Old panty hose or knee-highs
- Dishwashing soap/gel
- An old towel
- Serrated knife
- Any embellishments you'd like to add (ribbon, beads, be creative!)

Steps:

1. Start out with a piece of fleece about the size of a large cotton ball
2. Use “strips” of fleece in a size that is comfortable to you and wrap layers of color around your fleece ball you will be creating. It is sort of the motion of winding a ball of yarn, but with something the width of 4 fingers instead of a thin strand of yarn. You want the fibers to criss-cross. Don't spend time trying to make each later precise, as when we start to squeeze and felt the ball, everything will move in its own direction.
3. Continue wrapping the fleece layers until you have something a bit larger than a softball. (You can wrap colored wool yarns in your layers as well – just make sure it isn't non-felting wool like SuperWash).
4. Optional: An easy way to embellish the outside of your felted pin cushion is to wrap some wool yarn around the fleece ball at this point. Hey, wool yarn will felt too! A contrasting color to your outer layer will look good, use whatever you have in your stash, or unravel some of that wool sweater that you can't wear anymore after you shrunk it!
5. Stuff your fleece ball in the toe of some old panty hose or knee-highs and tie a knot at the open end.
6. Fill your bucket/bowl with as-hot-as-it-can-get tap water. Add about a nickel-sized dollop of dishwashing soap and swizzle it around.
7. Wearing rubber gloves (that water is HOT!), submerge your felt ball into the water and gently squeeze it as if you were hand washing a delicate sweater. It will feel like this fleece ball has no shape at all. After 5-10 minutes you should see the wool fibers start to creep through the panty hose and the “ball” should feel firmer and be getting smaller.
8. Once you feel like the panty hose are going to get felted into your ball, take the ball out of the water and squeeze (gently!) the excess water out. Transfer to your folded up old towel (on a surface that can get wet – like the kitchen counter).
9. Remove the panty hose – snip just below the knot you tied and GENTLY pull the panty hose away from the felted ball. At this point the fibers should be felted enough that your ball isn't going to fall apart.
10. Start rolling around the felt ball on the towel with firm pressure. We want to get it into a tube shape – about the size of a can of soup. Rolling it back and forth you should start to really feel it firm up.
11. Optional – if you want to get extra felting going on at this point, toss it in a zippered pillowcase cover (just to keep any fuzz from clogging up your washing machine) and toss it in the washing machine with an old pair of jeans or towels and wash on the hot water cycle.
12. Once it feels quite firm, you have to wait for it to dry. You could throw it in the dryer with some old jeans/towels to speed up this process.
13. Once it is dry (and really you just have to be patient and guess since the outside will dry the fastest) figure out how tall you want your pin cushion and make 2 cuts (as if you were slicing cookies from the cookie-dough tubes). 2-inches should be the minimum height so pins don't poke through the bottom!
14. Embellish: The felted pin cushions look lovely as-is! But if you are an embellisher, then have at it! Tying a simple ribbon around the pin cushion or sewing some beads on, whatever is your cup of tea.