

Spring Cleaning

by Maddy Cranley

Spring, the season of renewal, is finally here accompanied by certain traditions that are embedded in the rhythm of our lives. Spring cleaning is one of those rituals that is given much attention, particularly by those long and unachievable lists found in magazines displayed at the grocery store checkout. At this time of year, it is likely most of us do make some attempt to tune up and toss out so that we can maintain a sparkling order in our environments.

A yarn stash can always use a good spring cleaning. The dilemma of whether to throw or not to throw poses its question time and time again as we try to decide either by standards of individual taste or fashion gurus, what yarn bundles to label as "keepers". Colors and textures can become outdated either in the fashion world or in your world. That gorgeous pink mohair may not look quite so appealing on a body that seems to have unwittingly accumulated a few too many pounds over the years since first purchasing that soft, fluffy yarn. Pure wools and cottons may have become your fiber favorites. Perhaps experience has shown man-made fibers do not give the quality of wearing satisfaction that justifies all the knitting time it takes to fashion a garment. Yarn with a "maybe" label would probably best benefit from being sent to a charity knitting organization or a local group in need of craft materials.

If you do choose to keep certain yarns (and like the majority of us, choose to keep all of them), you might revamp your storage system and catalog yarns by color, fiber content or yarn weight. If you are starting out the project gate with a particular pattern in hand or color in mind, your choices will then be readily available at a glance. Perhaps your system places yarns in seasonal piles of summer and winter weights and fibers. If you are really a fanatic, subdivide seasonal yarns by weight, fiber content and color - no, I didn't think so.

Pattern books, knitting magazines and instruction leaflets are too precious to ever place on the throwaway pile. Outdated garment styles can still harbor a unique color combination or stitch technique that can be reworked in a trendy color or a fashionable fiber. If you feel the need to spring clean the knitting library, books arranged by style or yarn weight can make for easy access and loose leaflets neatly placed in binders assure that knitting information is near at hand.

Wintry wool sweaters can benefit from a refreshing hand washing with a mild soap before going into hibernation. Both sweaters in seasonal storage and yarn stashes in limbo need protection from dust and pests. Dust that can be seen to accumulate on furniture does not magically avoid stored sweaters and yarn. Unfortunately, storage usually means placing in a box with a lid, stuffing under a bed or shifting onto the top shelf of a closet. Out of sight, out of mind makes the debut of these yarns an even more remote possibility. Plastic bags seem to be the most common choice but are not the best storage container for yarn or hand knitted garments. Cotton bags, such as zippered pillowcase protectors, allow the yarns to "breathe" and make a much better option for fiber storage. Tuck in a moth repellent and keep bags out of damp basements and leaky attics in order to avoid damage from moisture or mildew. Now if they could only make those cotton bags see-through!

Maddy Cranley is a professional knitwear designer, who has created exclusive designs for knitting and craft magazines, authored and published three books on the subject of creating felt garments and projects from handknitting, and produces an ever-growing line of maddy laine handknitting patterns. For additional information, see <http://www.maddycraft.com>

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