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Natural Knits for Babies and Moms: Beautiful Designs Using Organic Yarns

According to the 2005 CYCA consumer research study, baby blankets and baby items remain among the favorite projects of knitters and crocheters in the United States. In 2005, 50% of knitters and crocheters in the United States made a baby blanket (the second most popular project), with an additional 20% reporting that they made at least one baby item (the fourth most popular project).

Loveland, Colo.: Renowned British knitwear designer Louisa Harding offers an inspired collection of patterns for mother and baby's first 18 months together, created with organically grown and naturally produced cotton and wool yarns, in **NATURAL KNITS FOR BABIES AND MOMS: BEAUTIFUL DESIGNS USING ORGANIC YARNS** (Interweave Press, September 2006).

"When I was pregnant, I decided to start working with organic yarns to reflect my philosophy of new life and new babies: keeping them wrapped in as natural an environment as possible, just like the one they've come from," says Harding. "The yarns I've selected for this book contain no pesticides, petroleum-based synthetic fertilizers, or harmful dyes in their production, so they are safe and healthy for babies, moms, and the planet."

Beautifully photographed by Harding's husband, **NATURAL KNITS FOR BABIES AND MOMS: BEAUTIFUL DESIGNS USING ORGANIC YARNS** uniqueness comes from including not only patterns for baby, but also two inventive nursing sweaters that are convenient and stylish and a distinctive "bump" sweater with one-of-a-kind expandable side panels for expectant moms.

These are gorgeous and achievable patterns with clear instructions and easy shaping using the most basic stitches. The projects are designed for the beginning to average knitter, so new mothers and grandparents-to-be or friends wanting to offer a nurturing gift can make exquisite finished items with ease.

Each of Harding's designs for baby—whether it's the kimono sweater or lace edged cardigan—is elegant and simple, allowing the yarns to shine in each design.

The collection is extremely versatile, as Harding often presents several options for finishing a pattern, allowing the knitter to customize the garment with edgings or embellishments for a little boy or girl. Harding covers most sweater shapes and styles, from a basic crew neck to a V-neck cardigan, from a sweater vest to a collared jacket, plus other wearables like hats, booties, mittens, and an adorable dress. Rounding out the items for baby are patterns for charming knitted toys (a cat, bear, and rabbit), herb-scented pillows, and baby blankets. The cot blanket is a perfect group project—each person can knit one square, to be assembled for a special gift.

With step-by-step instructions and helpful illustrations, **NATURAL KNITS FOR BABIES AND MOMS: BEAUTIFUL DESIGNS USING ORGANIC YARNS** is the perfect pattern book for embracing all things natural and organic as knitters welcome a new baby—every stitch will pass on love and affection. These handknitted items will be among the most cherished in a baby's or mom's wardrobe and are a great option for those looking for a different and conscientious approach to their knitting.

NATURAL KNITS FOR BABIES AND MOMS: BEAUTIFUL DESIGNS USING ORGANIC YARNS by Louisa Harding

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25 illustrations, 40 color photographs

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About the author: Louisa Harding has been designing knitwear professionally for more than fifteen years. In 2005, she launched a signature line of yarns and design collection in the United States and the United Kingdom, distributed by Knitting Fever. Her designs have appeared in numerous publications, including *Rowan Knitting Magazine*, *Vogue Knitting*, and *Knitting* magazine. She also has worked as an in-house designer for Rowan Yarns and Jaeger Handknits. Harding lives in Holmfirth, England, with her husband Stephen Jessup, who photographed *Natural Knits for Babies and Moms*, and two children, Belle (Miss Bea) and Oscar, who were the inspiration for Rowan's "Miss Bea" line of children's patterns and Harding's previous books, *Miss Bea's Band* (Watson Guptill, 2004) and *Miss Bea's Playtime* (Watson Guptill, 2003). She is a graduate of Brighton University, United Kingdom, with a BA in Textiles for Fashion.
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About Interweave Press: In business since 1975, Interweave Press publishes magazines and books related to fiber, thread, needlework, and beads. Throughout Interweave's evolution, its publications have focused on natural materials and processes, a respect for doing, and an appreciation of the fine, simple things in life. Interweave publishes six magazines, including *Beadwork*, *Handwoven*, *Interweave Knits*, *PieceWork*, *Spin-Off*, and *Fiberarts*. Interweave is dedicated to creating a resource for its readers to find the best information in the field of interest, the latest news, the best products, the newest techniques, and the history behind the techniques.

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ABOUT ORGANIC YARNS

Each of the yarns used in this book is made from organic cottons or wools that are increasingly available in yarn shops in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, or can be purchased from across the world using the Internet.

Organic wool is produced from the fleece of animals reared on organically farmed, pesticide-free land. The yarns are washed and spun using vegetable-based soaps and oils; no chemicals are used to bleach or treat the yarn. Many of the organic wool yarns used here are spun using undyed fleece, which gets its color from the natural shade of the sheep. Color variations can be achieved by spinning or plying different natural colors together. Traditional wool yarn can be too itchy to wear close to the skin, but many spinners now make very soft wool blends using different types of fleece. If you use a wool yarn that is slightly coarse in texture, try handwashing the finished pieces with environmentally friendly wool wash, which will make the fabric feel wonderfully soft. **Organic cotton** is grown and harvested without the use of agrochemicals. The colors in the organic cottons used in this book are grown that way—the cotton has been bred so that the intensity of color comes from the cotton bud itself. As you might expect, the cottons have very earthy tones, ranging from very pale naturals to beige and brown and even sage and dark green. The yarn is soft and feels nice against the skin, but it does not have much elasticity. It can also be quite heavy, so it is not practical for big garments or blankets. **Wool and cotton mix** is a good compromise, as it has the softness of cotton but retains heat and elasticity like pure wool. The wool/cotton blends used in this book have been dyed using environmentally friendly processes.

YARNS USED IN THIS BOOK

Cottage Industry: Pakucho Peruvian 100% Organic Cotton. Grown in Peru by rural artisan and Indian farmers using pre-Columbian farming techniques, and manufactured by Pakucho, these fibers are never touched by pesticides, bleaches, dyes, or other chemicals. The colors occur naturally from pigmented cotton plants and the cotton is harvested manually, colors sorted entirely by hand, and the fiber mill-spun in small batches. They are inspected and certified by the Swiss agency SKAL with the EKO label to be fully organic. Available in a range of 8 naturally occurring shades. Website: www.pakucho.co.uk (U.K.) or www.cottageindustry.net/organic yarns.php (U.S.)

Blue Sky Alpacas: 100% Organic Cotton is grown and harvested without the use of agrochemicals, bleaches, dyes, or other chemicals. They are available in 6 naturally occurring shades. Website: www.blueskyalpacas.com

Green Mountain Spinnery: GREENSPUN Organic Cotton Comfort and GREENSPUN Green Mountain Green. The “Cotton Comfort” fibers are actually made of 80% wool, 20% cotton. “Green Mountain Green” is made of 40% mohair and 60% fine wool. The “Green Mountain Green” variegated skeins range in color from off-white to medium gray and are washed and spun with vegetable-based soaps and oils rather than the petroleum-based products standard in the textile industry. No chemicals are used to bleach, mothproof, shrink proof, or remove chaff. The “Organic Cotton Comfort” skeins come in a wider range of colors created with low-impact dyes. Website: www.spinnery.com

Vreseis Limited: Foxfibre Cotton, Foxfibre Cotton Chenille, Foxfibre Boiled Cotton Chenille. Sally Vreseis Fox, owner of FoxFibre: Colour by Nature, has spent years perfecting her cotton plant breeding program to develop a range of naturally colored yarns in shades of greens and browns. Her company is dedicated to a sustainable approach to agriculture, and all of the cotton from her plant breeding nursery is

certified organic. Her goal is to develop organic methods that are suitable for large-scale production of Foxfibre cotton. Website: <http://vreseis.com>

Garthenor Organic Pure Wool: Jacob. Garthenor's wool is shorn from traditional and rare breeds of Certified Organic British sheep, which are kept on organic land that is not treated with herbicides, pesticides, or artificial fertilizers. The fleeces are processed to the Organic Textile Standards (U.K.) and the yarns carry the Soil Association Certified Organic Symbol (U.K.). No harmful chemicals, no chemical mothproofing, and no natural herbal insect deterrents are used during processing. The yarn is handwashed with a biodegradable detergent, and it is neither dyed nor bleached. Website: www.organicpurewool.co.uk

WHY ORGANIC WOOL?

"The textile industry, taken as a whole, is among the top ten most polluting industries in the world and the conventional woollen industry contributes to this from the production of the fleece which may then pass through many toxic chemical processes during the manufacture of the end products. Most conventional woollen products are no longer "natural" having been treated by one or more of the following processes: alkaline baths to remove dirt and grease, acid baths to remove vegetable matter, anti-shrink for machine washing, bleaching, dyeing, mothproofing, and possibly flame proofing; as well as often being blended with man-made fibres. It is difficult to quantify the effects of chemical inputs, but there is growing evidence to show that some of the chemicals used in the treatment of wool are harmful to health and the environment." © **Garthenor Organic Pure Wool**, 2005.

WHY ORGANIC COTTONS?

- Cotton uses approximately 25% of the world's insecticides and more than 10% of the pesticides (including herbicides, insecticides, and defoliants). (Allan Woodburn)
- Approximately 10% of all pesticides sold for use in U. S. agriculture were applied to cotton in 1997, the most recent year for which such data is publicly available. (ACPA)
- Fifty-five million pounds of pesticides were sprayed on the 12.8 million acres of conventional cotton grown in the United States in 2003 (4.3 pounds/ acre), ranking cotton third behind corn and soybeans in total amount of pesticides sprayed. (USDA)
- Over 2.03 billion pounds of synthetic fertilizers were applied to conventional cotton in 2000 (142 pounds/acre), making cotton the fourth most heavily fertilized crop behind corn, winter wheat, and soybeans. (USDA)
- The Environmental Protection Agency considers seven of the top 15 pesticides used on cotton in 2000 in the United States as "possible," "likely," "probable," or "known" human carcinogens (acephate, dichloropropene, diuron, fluometuron, pendimethalin, tribufos, and trifluralin). (EPA)
- In 1999, a work crew reentered a cotton field about five hours after it was treated with tribufos and sodium chlorate (reentry should have been prohibited for 24 hours). Seven workers subsequently sought medical treatment and five have had ongoing health problems. (California DPR)

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