

A Loom with a View

My husband and I live in a smallish house, 1,450 square feet. When we first moved into it from our 700-square-foot apartment, it was vast—huge, we'd never be able to fill all that space! We rattled around it, giddy with the wide vistas. Ten years, a small child, and a growing obsession with fiber arts later, that's all changed.

When I brought home my first spinning wheel shortly after we moved in, it was quaint and picturesque by the wood stove, a lovely addition to the room. The baskets of handspun yarn that soon followed were colorful and cheering; the rainbow skeins in a variety of textures only added to the ambience.

It was when the four-shaft Baby Wolf floor loom followed me home that my husband began to get concerned. Unfurled, it took up quite a bit of floor space. I pointed out, however, that it folded up compactly and could be wheeled out of the way.

Then came my first weaver's garage sale, where I acquired a vast quantity of yarns: wools, nubby silks, cottons, and rayons for my stash. Then came our guild's "Studio Clearing Sale" and more bargain-priced treasures came home with me. Finally, I discovered eBay and wonderful online classifieds such as the Spinner's and Weaver's Housecleaning Pages. My knack for sniffing out bargains had netted me the beginnings of a weaving studio, but our house was suffering.

One wall of the garage became stacked with clear boxes of yarns, organized by fiber. The front room housed my looms, but in such a way that you had to reorganize furniture to get to them. Spinning wheels roamed the house, tucked into niches and corners, waiting to trip up the unwary husband or be disassembled by a curious toddler.

"Something has to give," my husband cried in frustration one night, hopping up and down cradling his foot after a late-night equipment run-in. "Can't you get rid of some of this weaving stuff?" I tried. But which do you sell, the loom you learned on, the loom you wove on while in labor with your child, the loom you imagined that child learning to weave on himself, one day? Or the more recent eight-shaft loom fitted with the computerized dobby that isn't made anymore and can't be bought for love nor money? Do you give up the box of slubby silk you bought at two dollars a pound, knowing full well that it will cost you thirty a pound to replace it?

But something did have to give.

After many impassioned negotiations with my husband, I discovered that what he really wanted was a room of his own, a retreat from all things toddler and fiber. What I really wanted was my fiber tools collected in one easy-to-access location.

We struck a bargain. I moved my computer and desk out of our joint home office, giving him the entire room. And I took over the front room. A new coat of paint, wooden bookshelves and tables from IKEA, and I now have the studio of my dreams—a place of peace and joy.




Syne's first loom, weaving fabric for a kimono, and its view.



Syne's winding corner, including a painting of her husband's grandmother, a weaver, painted by his grandfather.

My husband is happy in his upstairs enclave. My son has his room for toys and pirate adventures. And in the hub of the house, like a happy spider, I chat with them, keep an eye on dinner, and weave. When I've got the windows open, neighbors walking by find me at work behind my looms. When company comes to the door, my studio is the first thing they see. I stopped fighting weaving, stopped tucking it into the odd corner, under a table, in a closet behind the coats. Instead, I invited it in and gave it a space of its own.

After much work and effort, I've gotten what I always wanted: a loom with a view. 

SYNE MITCHELL of North Bend, Washington, learned to weave three-and-a-half years ago and has been obsessed ever since. Author of several novels, she combines her interest in storytelling and all things weaving in an Internet-based talk-radio show on handweaving: WeaveCast (www.weavecast.com).