

GIVE YOUR NATURAL COLORED FIBER THE 'RED-CARPET' TREATMENT!

By Nancy Wilson – Camp Verde, AZ

This vest started as an attempt to entice more sales of natural colored fiber. Natural colors aren't as sexy as the bright dyed braids in fiber and yarn stores. So I decided to see what I could do to change that. Besides, how many fiber-producing animals have the wide variety of natural colors as our wonderful camelids!

I spun a two-ply marled yarn (see my previous article about this process). One ply is a combination of dark brown and gray, and the other ply is a brown and light tan. I like the richness of the resulting yarn. Using a marled yarn for this project made the task of spinning enough yarn more interesting than had I used a single solid color. The vest is based on the Fiber Trends Options Vest pattern (the hip length version). I also have a knit cotton vest that's a similar shape so I used that as a reference. The stitch pattern is one that I really like (and easy to remember). For you knitters out there it's a variation of stockinette stitch.

Row 1 (right side): knit one, purl one and repeat across the row

Row 2 (wrong side): purl across

Row 3 (right side): purl one, knit one and repeat across the row

Row 4 (wrong side): purl across



I made a nice large gauge sample to figure out what size needle to use and see what the stitch pattern would look like. I ended up with a size 5 needle. I did some calculations and figured out how

many stitches to cast on. The vest is knit in the round up to the arm holes then each side and back is worked separately and then the shoulders get bound off using a three needle bind off. The only finishing work was weaving in loose ends. My kind of pattern!

When it came time to change to a new ball of yarn, I realized that there was a definite color difference between the first ball and the rest of the batch. To make a nicer transition, I alternated rows between the new yarn and the old yarn (yes, there was some unknitting or frogging involved).



I also decided to make a few changes to the pattern so the vest would lay nicer. I did a four row garter stitch edge at the bottom and then kept the first four stitches of each row in garter stitch. I slipped the first stitch of each row as if to purl, so there's a nice edge up the front.

I am really pleased with how the vest turned out. For me, this was a big project. I'm not sure I'm up to a full-blown sweater with sleeves either from the knitting stamina it takes or the amount of hand spun yarn that would be involved. Plus, where I live in Arizona a vest is usually all you need.

So I encourage all you fiber artists out there to combine natural colors and see what sort of unique, one-of-a-kind items you can make!

