



*There is a beautiful spirit breathing now
its mellow richness on the clustered trees,
And, from a beaker full of richest dyes,
pouring new glory on the autumn woods...'*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



KNITTING AUTUMN

Once upon a time, I 'had my colors done', all the rage in the 1980's, where a swatch-wielding lady dubbed me an 'autumn'. A very good thing, too, since I have always worn harvest hues and no season captures my spirit more. I would never have fallen for being labeled anything else.

Autumn is a celebration, a glory feast of color - red, gold, orange, with a myriad of connecting colors born of ripening fruit and crisp golden sunlight. An autumn in the northeast is alight in a fiery burn of red, orange and yellow, enough heated color to enflame the memory throughout the bleached days of winter. In other parts of the world, I've seen it burnish the landscape into wheaten

golds and fluid bronze with daps of plum across the hills.

In this issue, I encourage all you inspired knitters to knit molten color into a piece of wearable art. Celebrate the changing seasons. Choose a beloved once-knit pattern to retool for autumn spirit, one of mine or another's, it doesn't matter.

HOW TO KNIT AUTUMN



Since evocative knitting is impressionistic and begins with an idea, a picture captured in a memory or photograph, it should be about something that warms the heart and excites the imagination. An adventure of stimulating 'what if's?' evolves into exciting knitwork.

The best such adventure is one with no set course and plenty of opportunities for deviation along the way. Serendipity reins. And you just know the goal isn't to make something look exactly like a place or scene with painterly detail or even someone else's design but to capture the atmosphere through yarn and stitches.

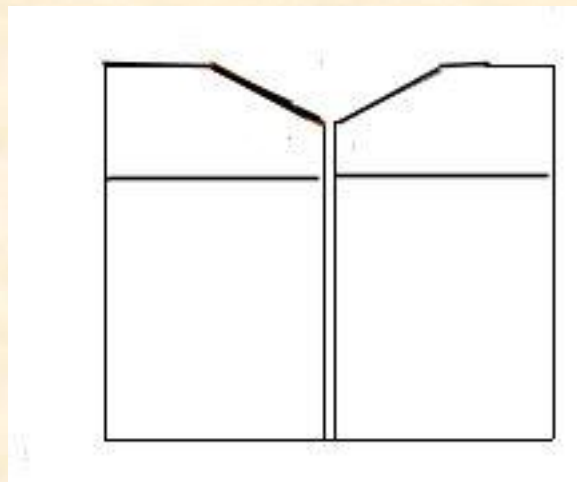
A pattern isn't necessary for such voyages but a place to start, a launching pad for creativity, is very helpful. So, why not re-tool a favorite pattern while fashioning your own canvas? Here's two autumn woods design ideas to use for modifying existing patterns. Choose one of my designs or something languishing in your pattern library, maybe something you've knit before and know well.

The first option is the **FALL TRUNK VEST/TOP**, one half of which is shown below. Both half's are identical, except the vest version has a divided front with buttonholes. For this modification, I used the Blue Skies Over Sienna cardigan pattern as my starting point, perfect because it's worked side-to-side, a requirement for the vertical, trunk-like ribbing.



The autumn modification is created by knitting a ribbed bottom trunk side-to-side in two or three pieces, depending on whether you are making a vest or a top, and then picking up and knitting

the leafy bodice in a bottom up configuration. Here's a schematic of what this looks like, a design kept simple so you can concentrate on serious leaf play. Note how this version has a vee neck while the knitted piece shown in my photo more closely follows Blue Skies Over Sienna's neckline.



The ribbing is random rib (described in the Blue Skies pattern) which is basically free-range ribbing in knit and purl with the right-side purls forming the raised tree trunks and the in between knits the background. My background is olive green with various brown yarns for the trunk rows ranging from brown-black to grey. Some trunks are two rows wide, some four, some three -- random sizing, as in nature!

Since the bottom half is knit side to side in one piece, adjust it to fit as you knit by working along until the piece as wide

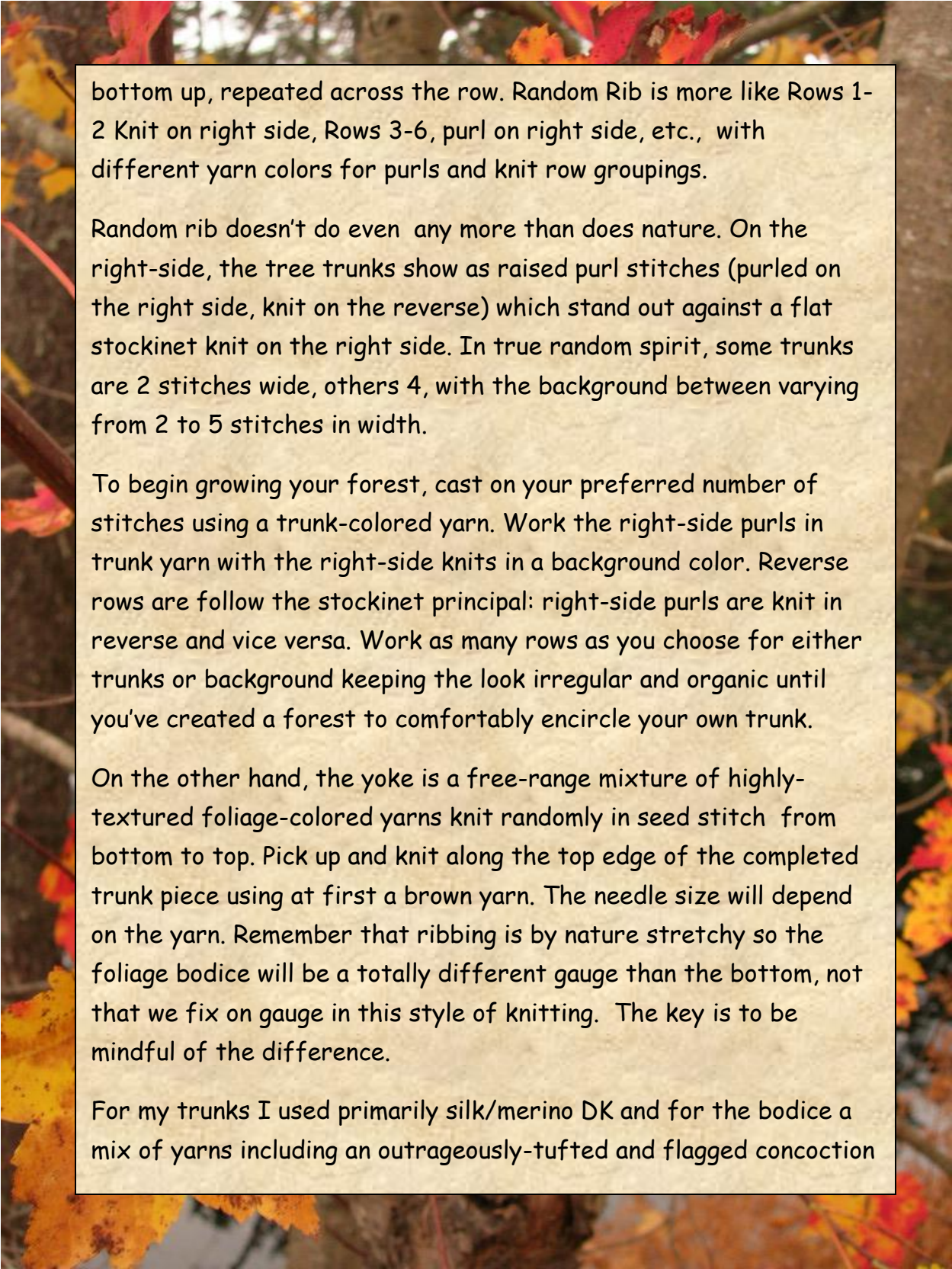
enough to encircle your hips comfortably and remembering to factor in a 1-inch button band if making a vest. Because the rows of purls and knits cause a modified rib effect, the fabric will have inherent stretchiness. You may wish to forgo some of that hug and make your trunk zone roomier -- a decision that can make later. The immediate issue for sizing, then, is how many stitches to determine the length.

So, decide how long you'd like your bottom half by measuring the point just below your armpit to preferred hip length. You can, of course, decide to have your leafy bodice begin under the bustline, at which point measure from that point down. I settled on 12 inches, enough to cover my hips with a forest of svelte tree trunks but not so long as to make a coat, though that's easily done. I aimed at having the leafy part unfurl above my bustline based on my own physiology. Should you try on your finished piece and find it not long enough, there's always the option of picking up and knitting a bottom band, which could make a totally fetching forest floor.

Next, determine your number of cast on stitches by working up a swatch for gauge using your selected yarns knit over random rib (recipe follows). I average 5 stitches per inch and cast on 45 stitches on size 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ /6.5 needles.

Random Rib:

Random rib is a term I use for my ribbing of choice, a totally free-range rib characterized by an irregular number of rows in both the knit and purl groupings. Traditional ribbing is composed of regular clusters of knit and purl, such as k2p2 worked from the



bottom up, repeated across the row. Random Rib is more like Rows 1-2 Knit on right side, Rows 3-6, purl on right side, etc., with different yarn colors for purls and knit row groupings.

Random rib doesn't do even any more than does nature. On the right-side, the tree trunks show as raised purl stitches (purl on the right side, knit on the reverse) which stand out against a flat stockinet knit on the right side. In true random spirit, some trunks are 2 stitches wide, others 4, with the background between varying from 2 to 5 stitches in width.

To begin growing your forest, cast on your preferred number of stitches using a trunk-colored yarn. Work the right-side purls in trunk yarn with the right-side knits in a background color. Reverse rows are follow the stockinet principal: right-side purls are knit in reverse and vice versa. Work as many rows as you choose for either trunks or background keeping the look irregular and organic until you've created a forest to comfortably encircle your own trunk.

On the other hand, the yoke is a free-range mixture of highly-textured foliage-colored yarns knit randomly in seed stitch from bottom to top. Pick up and knit along the top edge of the completed trunk piece using at first a brown yarn. The needle size will depend on the yarn. Remember that ribbing is by nature stretchy so the foliage bodice will be a totally different gauge than the bottom, not that we fix on gauge in this style of knitting. The key is to be mindful of the difference.

For my trunks I used primarily silk/merino DK and for the bodice a mix of yarns including an outrageously-tufted and flagged concoction

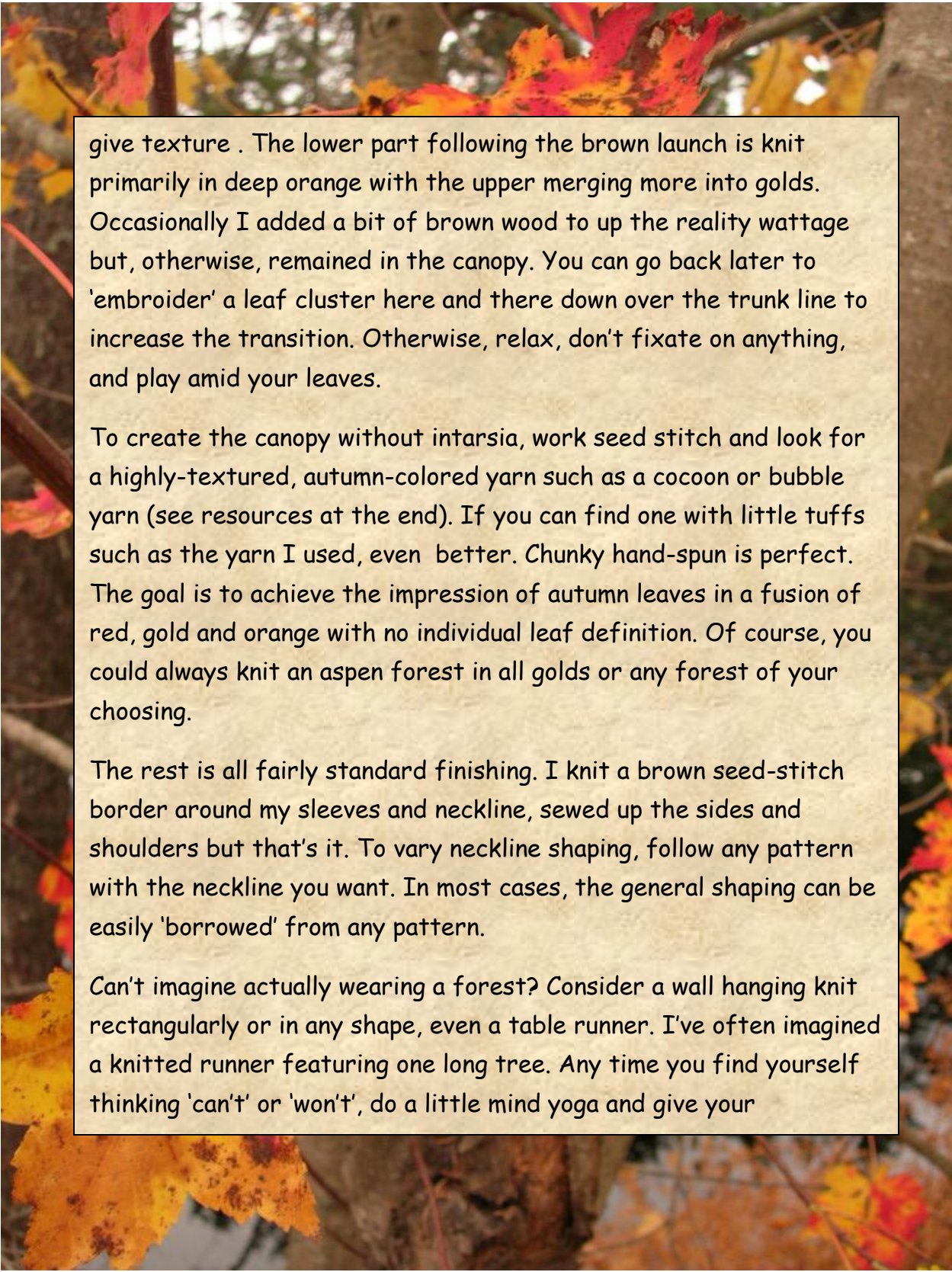
devised in the fun-fur days. I'd use one of those gorgeous chunky hand-spun creations in another version. In any case, go down several needle sizes from what the yarn typically expects as both the yarn and the stitch are naturally more expansive.

To make neckline shapings, simply follow the design specifications for whatever pattern you are following. I find that binding off the center 10-20 stitches on the back, followed by a similar decrease of 2-3 stitches x 4 on either side of the neck, works. You can gauge how many stitches to bind off on each side by gauging your neck needs by eye. Don't be afraid to do this. Design-wise, most knitters are smarter than they think. After that just knit straight to your shoulder length.



The back neckline in progress

From here, knit impressionistically. I've used only a little intarsia with mostly stranded work in three colors with lots of seed stitch to



give texture . The lower part following the brown launch is knit primarily in deep orange with the upper merging more into golds. Occasionally I added a bit of brown wood to up the reality wattage but, otherwise, remained in the canopy. You can go back later to 'embroider' a leaf cluster here and there down over the trunk line to increase the transition. Otherwise, relax, don't fixate on anything, and play amid your leaves.

To create the canopy without intarsia, work seed stitch and look for a highly-textured, autumn-colored yarn such as a cocoon or bubble yarn (see resources at the end). If you can find one with little tufts such as the yarn I used, even better. Chunky hand-spun is perfect. The goal is to achieve the impression of autumn leaves in a fusion of red, gold and orange with no individual leaf definition. Of course, you could always knit an aspen forest in all golds or any forest of your choosing.

The rest is all fairly standard finishing. I knit a brown seed-stitch border around my sleeves and neckline, sewed up the sides and shoulders but that's it. To vary neckline shaping, follow any pattern with the neckline you want. In most cases, the general shaping can be easily 'borrowed' from any pattern.

Can't imagine actually wearing a forest? Consider a wall hanging knit rectangularly or in any shape, even a table runner. I've often imagined a knitted runner featuring one long tree. Any time you find yourself thinking 'can't' or 'won't', do a little mind yoga and give your

imagination a stretch. The goal is always to explore knitting in a new dimension and to leave fear at the door. Like autumn, the creative soul is always in transition.



A Tree Grows...on my Pullover or vest or cardigan



But then, you could always knit a single tree or six. For this autumn

project, the emphasis is on six, intarsia-knit trees, nearly evenly-spaced, growing up through a cardigan or pullover against a background of ombre-toned stockinet. The bottom half is knit on circulars all in one piece with the yoke picked up and knit after. This one intends to have sleeves, which I confess I have yet to knit, but initial shape is straight, meaning nearly any 'plain' pullover-style or vest design can serve as a base. But, you really don't need a pattern, just a gauge.

Factor gauge based on chosen mix of background yarns and preferred needle size. Do up a swatch then multiply the number of stitches per inch times the number of inches needed to comfortably encircle your hips. Add at least two more inches to compensate for the slight constriction your trees will create in the stockinet background and you'll have your cast-on stitch number.

To begin, cast on with a dark-colored yarn. A hand-dyed yarn with subtle texture/color variations delivers the best results. Knit the first row before working two inches of seed stitch in a forest-floor hue to both give stability to your base and form a visual grounding for your trees. Now place six markers somewhat evenly spaced along your needles to mark tree-planting locations.

Here's the good news: you do not require charts for these intarsia trees. Ah, liberation! Each tree begins with 8-16 stitches in random rib such as k2p2k4 or k3p4k3. Vary the width of your trunks and plan on making at least one much thicker than the rest. Randomize.



To plant a tree, attach brown yarn at each marker, holding the yarn for each trunk in 'butterflies' or spools to keep things tidy behind your work. As intarsia goes, this one is relatively painless. The trunk yarns are held on the spools dangling while the background yarn is carried across the trunks, fair-isle fashion. Google 'Fair-isle' and 'intarsia' for excellent YouTube videos on techniques for both, if this is your first time. The important thing is to wrap your yarn at the beginning of each color change to avoid holes. The videos show you how.

Work each set of rib-stitched (knit and purl combos) tree trunks with stockinet stitch in between, gradually reducing trunk stitches as you go upwards. Though my background is hand-dyed DK-weight yarns worked primarily in stockingst, occasionally I added clusters of seed stitch or garter for variation. I also used three different tones of yarn, ombre-style, with colors ranging from green-gold, to gold, to gold cream, evoking the golden light of fall.

Once you approach a few inches short of bind-off near where the yoke will begin, split your tree trunk by knitting the background

color between bands of brown to form branches. This will mean a little visual dexterity so you may choose to eliminate these branch offices all together. However, for the brave: if you have 6 stitches of trunk, knit 2 brown stitches, add in two of the background color followed by two more brown stitches. Repeat three more times, increasing the background color between the two branches and moving the branch stitches outward at the same time.

Follow the description of knitting leaves impressionistically for knitting your leafy canopy, alternating patches of smooth yarn with textured to give the impression of dimension amid the leafery.

Upon completion of your autumn forest vest, jumper, wall-hanging, whatever, feel justly proud: you have just reduced the world's virtual carbon footprint by planting a tree, stitch by stitch.





Knitting autumnally is not just about knitting realistic or semi-realistic images but can also be all about color and texture. The obvious choice is to choose colors evoking the season of bounty: golds, browns, reds and oranges are the traditional hues but consider also plums and greens. What about an October night with deep, enamel-sky blues combined with deep, rich colors? Below, a symphony of plums brewed with orange and claret.



Designs featuring an autumn theme

FOUR WINDS AUTUMN WRAP:



AUTUMN GRASSES



RESOURCES



Hand spinners out there, here's the perfect venue for those rich, over-the-top yarns your art creates!

THE TRUNKS

When you set forth to forage for yarns for this project, remember that in nature, no color is flat but a multi-hued composite of countless shades. The eye at first glance blends everything into a single hue but that's just a little trick of visual convenience. Your knitting can tell a truer tale by mixing different brown yarns with black and grey or by aiming for hand-dyed offerings. You might also consider knitting a birch forest in white, silver-grey, and black trunks or evoking an aspen copse in full furl. Imagine your special forest as you embark upon this creative excursion. It's your own private place. I chose my own backyard, a color-burn of glory in the autumn.

Often a forest is enflamed from earth to sky as a fiery light reflects leaves both on the ground and on the tree, something to consider when choosing your forest background. Though I chose a dark olive, you might easily knit your background in brighter, goldy-er, hues much as I did in the pullover project. A basic black for the background would also work.

I know how many knitters crave exactly the yarns used in a project but many of mine became extinct within months. Sorry about that but this is your special forest, after all. Consider foraging in your local yarn shop or go online for offerings. Browns and autumn hues are widely available as nearly every yarn manufacturer has an autumn-flavored mixture with plenty of browns from which to choose.

For my lower truncated body, the closest options are listed below.

Consider purchasing one or two to mix with existing or less expensive yarns:

- 1 260 yd. hank of Tilli Tomas Pure&Simple in Bridgetown Brown
- 2 hanks Malabrigo Silky Merino in 181 Marron Oscuro
- 100 yards Art Fibers Brioche in #14
- 100 yards Art Fibers Cellini in #10 (#6 would be perfect for birch trunks)
- 200 yards Art Fibers Abacus #04
- 1 hank Fleece artist silk/wool in olive green
- 1 ball Crystal Palace Glam in Rich Brown/Brass

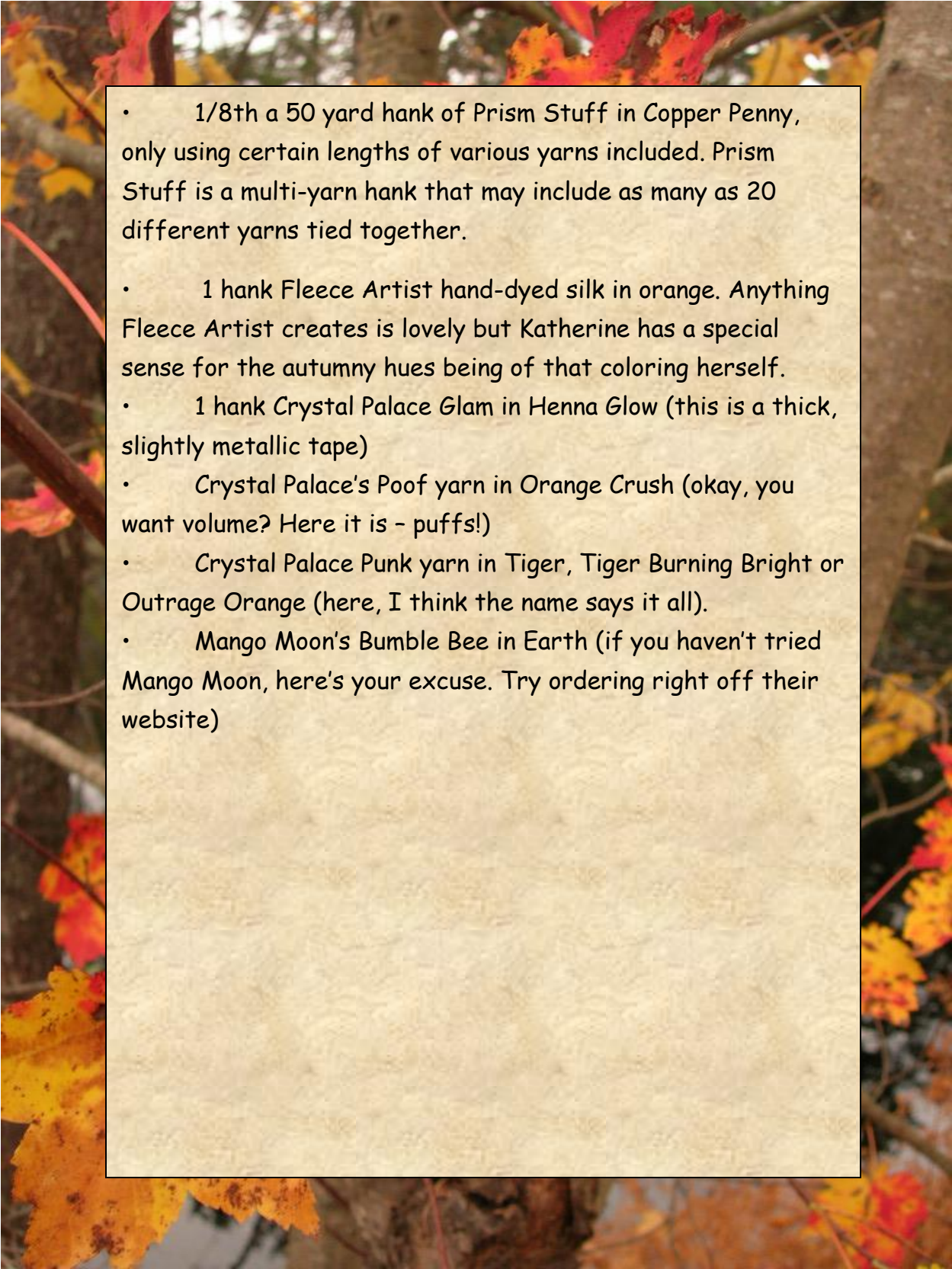
THE FOILAGE

The upper half or bodice is where a knitter can go wild. I used liberal amounts of orange and gold yarn amid any fuzzy, flagged, or cocoon yarn I could find. Texture rules here but the goal is to have random patches of plain-colored yarn amid equally random clusters of high-impact texture. Again, select just a couple of yarns for your foliage experience or let loose with multiple brilliant colors.

The list below is not intended to be a shopping list so much as a guide on the type of yarns that would work. Just remember to offset your wild and woolly textures with a few plainer offerings (not that anything orange could ever be considered truly plain).

A few that work well here include:

- 1 hank Prism Bon Bon (a thin tape) in gold

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- 1/8th a 50 yard hank of Prism Stuff in Copper Penny, only using certain lengths of various yarns included. Prism Stuff is a multi-yarn hank that may include as many as 20 different yarns tied together.
 - 1 hank Fleece Artist hand-dyed silk in orange. Anything Fleece Artist creates is lovely but Katherine has a special sense for the autumny hues being of that coloring herself.
 - 1 hank Crystal Palace Glam in Henna Glow (this is a thick, slightly metallic tape)
 - Crystal Palace's Poof yarn in Orange Crush (okay, you want volume? Here it is - puffs!)
 - Crystal Palace Punk yarn in Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright or Outrage Orange (here, I think the name says it all).
 - Mango Moon's Bumble Bee in Earth (if you haven't tried Mango Moon, here's your excuse. Try ordering right off their website)



