



The Plant-Based Fiber Guide

Choosing fibers perfect for the Central Texas climate

From Vision to Fiber



yarningfiberarts.com



A Note from Rachel

Hello there!

Welcome to the world of plant-based fibers. Over my quarter century as an avid knitter, I have tried all kinds of yarns. Like most folks, I started with a cheap acrylic from a big-box store. The scarf I made as my first project is amazingly warm, perfect for the freeze we seem to get every couple years in Central Texas.

Over time, though, my hands got more and more sensitive to the feel of the yarn passing through them for dozens (sometimes hundreds!) of hours during the creation process. These days, acrylic yarn feels squeaky in my hands. I can also see the difference between the beautiful drape offered by natural fibers and the shapeless forms that acrylic and polyester fabrics yield from a mile off.

I've thus naturally found myself gravitating toward plant-based fibers. Yarn made of these fibers turns the creation process into a luxurious experience. Unsurprisingly, plant-based fibers are breathable while plastic-based fibers (including acrylic) are not, so finished products feel great against the skin and are perfect for the Central Texas heat. In addition, the drape and, in many cases, natural sheen of plant-based fibers leads to understated sophistication in even the most basic pieces.

This guide offers you some of the wisdom I've gained over the years. For me, knitting has been nothing short of transformative. It is an act of self care, a spiritual practice, my version of creative expression, and an opportunity to play around and see what happens, all woven into one. My guess is that any artform allows practitioners to channel something our minds can't quite fathom, letting magic flow through us. With this guide, I hope to make the creation process more joyful for you, and to keep you practicing your chosen fiber art year round in central Texas.

This guide will walk you through the plant-based yarns I carry at Yarning alongside my carefully curated silk and animal-fiber yarns. You will learn what makes plant-based yarns different, how they perform in heat and humidity, and how to choose the right fiber for whatever you are creating next.

Happy Yarning!

Rachel

Founder, Yarning Fiber Arts



The Central Texas Fiber Problem

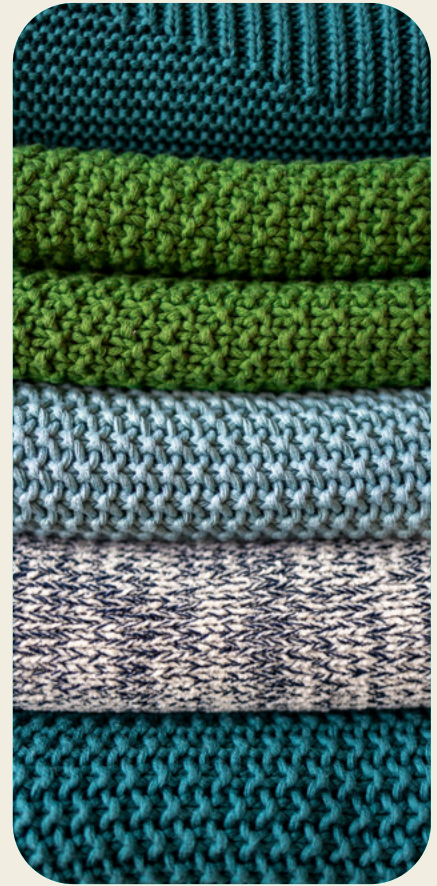
If you peruse the yarn aisle of most big-box stores, you'll find that the shelves are dominated by two things: acrylic and wool. Both are popular for good reasons. Acrylic is affordable and easy to care for. Wool is warm, resilient, and has a beautiful memory that holds stitches in place.

But if you live in Central Texas, where temperatures regularly climb past 95°F and humidity can make the air feel thick, both of these fibers create a real problem.

Acrylic is a plastic-based synthetic, so it does not breathe. Those who are sensitive to texture may notice it has a dreadfully squeaky feel in the hands and on the needles or hook. And wearing an acrylic garment during the Texas summer? It is likely to trap heat and perspiration close to your skin.

Wool is a wonderful insulator, which is exactly what you *do not* need when the heat index hits 105. Even lightweight wool can feel stifling in our climate.

This leaves a lot of fiber artists in Central Texas feeling stuck. They love their craft, but their yarn sits in a drawer for nine months out of the year.



Finding Fibers that Breathe

Plant-based fibers breathe, wick moisture, and feel luxurious against the skin, even when it is hot and humid outside. They also feel different in your hands while you work with them. Where synthetic yarn can feel squeaky or plasticky, plant-based fibers have a natural softness and drape that make the creation process more enjoyable.

Know Your Fibers

Each of the fibers below has its own personality. Some are crisp and structured. Others are silky and fluid. All of them breathe beautifully in the Central Texas climate.

Sugarcane Bagasse

What It Is

Sugarcane bagasse is the fibrous pulp left over after sugarcane is pressed for juice. This agricultural byproduct is processed into a viscose yarn that is biodegradable, recyclable, and requires remarkably little energy to produce. Sugarcane grows rapidly and the bagasse would otherwise be discarded, making it one of the most ecologically friendly fiber sources available.



How It Feels

Sugarcane viscose has a beautiful drape with a notable sheen. It is smooth and fluid in your hands, with a softness that surprises people. The finished fabric has a luster that elevates even simple projects.

Best For

Garments, accessories, and home pieces where you want drape and a refined look. Excellent for summer tops, lightweight scarves, and decorative projects.

Why It Works in Texas

Sugarcane fiber breathes well and moves with you. In the Texas heat, it feels cool and comfortable against the skin. It has good moisture absorption and releases humidity rather than trapping it.

Featured at Yarning

Circulo Sugar Cane is one of our most-loved yarns. Made from 100% viscose derived from sugarcane bagasse, it is wonderfully soft and a perfect example of how a renewable byproduct can become something luxurious.

Bamboo

What It Is

Bamboo fiber is derived from bamboo pulp, processed into a silky, smooth yarn. Most bamboo yarn is technically a rayon or viscose made from bamboo, which means it goes through a chemical process to become fiber. The result is a yarn with remarkable properties: drape, sheen, breathability, and sustainability.



How It Feels

Bamboo has a gorgeous, silky drape and a natural sheen. It feels cool to the touch, almost liquid in your hands. It is one of the softest fibers you will ever work with.

Best For

Lightweight scarves, shawls, summer cardigans, baby blankets (incredibly soft against sensitive skin), and any project where drape and elegance matter.

Why It Works in Texas

Bamboo is naturally moisture wicking, pulling sweat away from the skin and allowing it to evaporate. It also has natural temperature-regulating properties. In the Texas heat, a bamboo garment will keep you noticeably cooler and drier.

Tencel (Lyocell)

What It Is

Tencel is the brand name for lyocell, a semi-synthetic fiber made from sustainably sourced wood pulp, typically eucalyptus. Production uses a closed-loop process recovering over 99% of the solvent. This makes it one of the more environmentally responsible manufacturing processes in textiles.



How It Feels

Tencel is exceptionally smooth, soft, and cool to the touch. It has a drape similar to bamboo but with more body and structure. It resists wrinkles and pilling.

Best For

Garments you want to wear all day in the heat and accessories with a luxurious feel.

Why It Works in Texas

Tencel absorbs significantly more moisture than cotton and releases it quickly, keeping you dry even in high humidity. Research consistently shows lyocell outperforms cotton in moisture management.

Seaweed (SeaCell)

What It Is

SeaCell is one of the most innovative fibers in the yarn world. It blends ground seaweed into a wood-based lyocell fiber using the same closed-loop process as Tencel.

How It Feels

SeaCell is light, breathable, and remarkably soft, with a smooth, supple hand. The fiber carries trace minerals from the seaweed (calcium, magnesium, vitamin E) that interact with your skin when worn. Like linen, it has a slight toothiness that relaxes into a delicious softness with wear.

Why It Works in Texas

SeaCell absorbs moisture faster than cotton, making it exceptional for humidity. It has natural antibacterial properties that help garments stay fresher longer in the heat.



Best For

Close-to-skin garments, shawls, baby items, and anything where softness and skin-friendliness matter. A wonderful choice for people with sensitive skin.

Featured at Yarning

Pascuali and **Lang** carry beautiful seaweed-based yarns that we love recommending. Come feel the difference in the studio.

Aloe Vera

What It Is

Aloe vera fiber brings the soothing properties of the aloe plant into yarn, typically blended with viscose and cotton for softness, breathability, and the plant's natural benefits. Aloe vera requires minimal water and no pesticides.



How It Feels

Lightweight and silky smooth, with drape and softness between cotton and bamboo. Excellent stitch definition while still feeling fluid. Natural antibacterial and hypoallergenic properties keep it fresh and gentle on even the most sensitive skin.

Best For

Summer garments, baby items, accessories, and any project where you want softness with built-in skin benefits.

Why It Works in Texas

Breathability and moisture control are exceptional. Aloe vera fibers absorb UV rays and stay cool, making them a strong performer in intense Texas sun.

Featured at Yarning

Circulo Aloe Vera and **Berroco Vera** blend viscose aloe vera with cotton for a breathable, lightweight yarn with beautiful drape. Perfect for warm-weather projects.

Cupro

What It Is

Cupro is a regenerated cellulose fiber made from cotton linter, the fine fuzz around cotton seeds. This byproduct of cottonseed oil production would otherwise be wasted. The result is a fiber that feels like silk but is entirely plant derived.



How It Feels

Extraordinarily smooth, with an almost liquid drape and gentle luster. Its fibers have an almost perfectly round cross-section, giving it a silky feel and making it exceptionally gentle on skin. Takes dye beautifully.

Best For

Elegant garments, flowing accessories, pieces where drape is everything. Sometimes called “vegan silk” for makers who want luxury without animal-derived fibers.

Why It Works in Texas

Cupro has the highest moisture retention of any common fiber. It absorbs without becoming clammy and releases efficiently. Natural antistatic properties mean it does not cling.

Linen

What It Is

Linen comes from the flax plant and is the oldest known textile fiber in the world. It can feel stiff at first, but this is part of its charm. It softens dramatically with use and washing.

How It Feels

Fresh linen has a crisp, slightly textured hand. Once washed a few times, it transforms. Broken-in linen is one of the softest, most comfortable fabrics on earth, and it only gets better with age. (Pro tip: to speed up the breaking-in process, try soaking linen in a mix of one part white distilled vinegar (5% acidity) to eight parts warm water for anywhere from 30 minutes to overnight, then rinse with cool water, gently squeeze out excess water, and lay flat to dry.)



Best For

Projects used and washed often (linen improves with every wash), home textiles, summer garments, bags. Incredibly strong and durable.

Why It Works in Texas

Extremely breathable with natural moisture wicking. Dries very quickly. In the Texas heat, linen feels airy and light. There is a reason it has been the fabric of choice in hot climates for millennia.

Cotton

Cotton is the plant fiber most people know best. It is breathable, machine washable, gets softer with every wash, and produces excellent stitch definition. We carry it because it is a reliable, practical choice for everyday items like dishcloths, market bags, and baby pieces.

But honestly? Cotton is the least exciting fiber on our shelves. If you have only ever worked with cotton and acrylic, we would love for you to come in and feel the difference between cotton and any of the fibers above. The experience is eye opening.



The Yarning Difference

Every fiber in our shop is chosen for two things: how it feels in your hands while you work with it, and how it performs in the Central Texas climate. No synthetics. No plastics. Just fibers that breathe, drape, and bring pleasure to whatever fiber art you practice.



Choosing the Right Fiber

With so many options, how do you decide?

What am I making?

Items washed frequently do well in cotton or linen. Items meant to drape and flow come alive in bamboo, Cupro, or Tencel. For elevated pieces that are washed only on occasion, try aloe, seaweed, or sugar cane.

When will I wear or use it?

Texas summer (March through October): bamboo, Tencel, seaweed, and aloe vera are the moisture management superstars.

How do I want it to feel in my hands?

Sugarcane is smooth and lustrous. Bamboo is silky and cool. Seaweed is supple. Aloe vera is lightweight and soothing. Cupro is like liquid silk. Linen is textured and traditional. Come feel them all.

Structure or drape?

Cotton and linen provide structure. Bamboo, silk, Cupro, and Tencel provide drape. Sugarcane, seaweed, and aloe vera land in between.

A Note on Sustainability

People sometimes ask whether plant-based fibers are more sustainable than synthetics. The honest answer: it depends.

- **Plant-based fibers are biodegradable.** Sugarcane, linen, bamboo, seaweed, and aloe vera break down naturally. Synthetics like acrylic persist for hundreds of years.
- **Synthetics shed microplastics.** Every wash releases tiny plastic fibers into the water. Plant-based fibers do not.
- **Manufacturing matters enormously.** Tencel and SeaCell use closed-loop processes recovering 99%+ of solvent. Cupro and sugarcane yarns give new life to what would otherwise be wasted.
- **Bamboo processing is mixed.** Bamboo grows sustainably but most yarn uses a chemical viscose method. Cleaner processes exist but vary.
- **Longevity is sustainability.** A handmade piece from quality fiber, used for years, is inherently more sustainable than any fast-fashion garment.

At Yarning, we choose fibers that feel good, perform well in our climate, are free of plastic, and are meant to be treasured. We think that is a pretty good start.

Frequently Asked Questions

Which fiber should I start with?

Come in and touch a few. You will know within seconds.

Will plant-based fibers feel different from acrylic or wool?

Yes....and that can be a good thing! The natural smoothness of plant fibers can make the creation process more enjoyable, and the finished pieces will breathe and release heat in ways acrylic and wool cannot.

Are plant-based yarns more expensive?

Usually they are, from about \$9 to \$30 per skein. These are fibers that feel like heaven in the hands for the many hours you'll spend creating with them. Yarning also carries several budget-friendly plant-based yarns at \$6 per skein.

Can I use these fibers for any fiber art?

Absolutely. Every fiber here works for knitting, crochet and other fiber arts. Most yarns in the studio are strong enough to serve as warps for weaving.

How do I find the studio?

Search for Howard Post; Yarning is behind the Old Gregg Brewery in the back half of Building A.

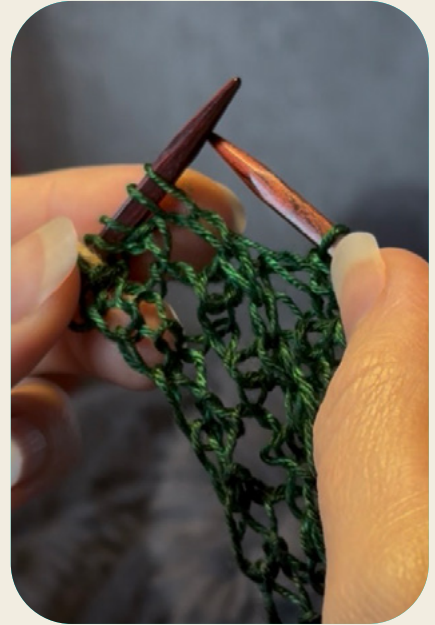
Do you offer classes?

Yes! Small, hands on, and for all kinds of fiber arts and levels. Check our website.

Come Feel the Difference

Hold a skein of sugarcane yarn in one hand and acrylic in the other. The difference is immediate and unmistakable.

- **Visit the shop.** Walk in. Touch anything. Stay as long as you like.
- **Browse our classes.** Small, hands on, all kinds of fiber arts and levels.
- **Follow us online.** Facebook and Instagram for inspiration and class announcements. Sign up for the newsletter at the bottom of shop.yarningfiberarts.com for a more intimate view of what Rachel is up to.
- **Share this guide.** Know someone who might love plant-based fibers?



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From vision to fiber.