

# *Knotty Lady* YARN S

## Get to Know Hemp!

Hemp is the "sober cousin" of cannabis since it contains none or less than 1% of the psychoactive component. Hemp has a multitude of uses from paper to textiles to yarn and industrial rope. Hemp uses can be traced all the way back to China in 800 BC where it was considered the "textile of the masses". It wasn't until the early 1900's when the production of paper and coal products started that led to the downfall of the hemp industry. After years of jealousy and smear campaigns, eventually led Congress to passing the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937 that caused extreme regulation and prohibition of the cannabis plant in the US.

Hemp not only has many uses but, is easy to grow and harvest and is a great way to replenish your soils nutrients. From seed, harvesting can happen about 4 to 6 weeks later in a nitrogen rich and draining soil with a mild climate, little humidity and 25-30 inches of rainfall per year. After harvesting the crop it can undergo several processes to utilize the entire plant in several ways. First the seeds are processed and can be used in cosmetics and have many nutritional benefits. The second process is also a beginning step into production of yarn, and that is to remove the leaves. The leaves can also be processed into making hemp oil which can be used by humans and pets (under the direction of health care professionals). Hemp oil can be used topically to help the skin and hair or orally for other health benefits. This is not to say that it is for everyone or a cure-all product, side effects and no results are possible.

### How do you make hemp yarn?

Hemp is processed similarly to linen. You can use the same equipment that one would use to process linen on a small scale! For a large scale production, there are special machines that are needed.

### Types of Retting:

First step after harvesting is retting, or rotting, which separates the long outer fibers used for textiles and the short inner fibers that are better for paper.

**Water Retting** - involves laying the stems in a body of warm, bacteria rich water for about 10 days.

**Dew Retting** - involves laying the stalk out in a field and letting the morning dew saturate the stalks while turning regularly for 3-6 weeks. When the fiber bundles are easily removed along the length of the stem, you are ready for the next step.

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## Decorticating

Also known as "breaking", which is the removal of the woody core from the stem using a breaker or fluted rollers. The machine below is used, on an industrial level, to turn the straw-like stalks into the fluffy hemp fiber.

## Scutching

After the stems are broken they are then "combed" by using a wooden stick or rotary blades. This further separates and softens the hemp fibers.

Hackling

Or combing the fibers to remove any remaining debris, align long fibers and remove shorter fibers. This is typically done on a special machine that also cuts the fibers into a more manageable length.



## Roving & Spinning

From here the hemp is twisted and drawn out to not only strength and soften the fibers more, but create roving to then spin. Spinning hemp can be done dry or wet. If spun dry, it will result in a coarser yarn. Wet spinning will result in a softer yarn. To help increase the softness you can treat the roving in a caustic soda and then bleach it using hydrogen peroxide.

Properties:

Hemp is naturally a tan to brown color that can be difficult to bleach without some fiber damage. However, it will still accept dyes. Hemp has low elasticity and similar, if not better, thermal properties than cotton. Unlike cotton, Hemp is stronger, more absorbent, and resistant to mildew and moths. Like most other fibers, there are alternative ways to process the fiber. In hemp's case, there are chemical baths and machines that are able to speed up the production process from seed to yarn. There is the possibility to have an "organic" mechanical process that has no chemicals but keeps the production efficiency of the machines.

Hemp is a highly sustainable, low-impact crop that can be turned into so many day to day items. Hemp also degrades at a faster rate than most comparable products on the market. The by-products of making hemp yarn can also undergo processing to be turned into paper, animal bedding or even construction materials. Dust by-products are also utilized by being pressed into pellets for fuel or soil additives. The United States is starting to take steps backward to benefit the hemp industry while keeping everyone safe and educated.

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## Hemp Yarns!

The Knotty Lady Team is always intrigued by yarn made from unique sources. Below is a selection of our hemp yarns.



Elsebeth Lavold Hempathy is 40% Hemp, 40% Cotton and 20% Modal in a DK weight. It is currently on sale and is even machine washable!



Knit One Crochet Too Daisy is 38% Linen, 32% Silk and 30% Hemp in a Sport weight and comes in 15 stunning colors!



Rowan Hemp Tweed Chunky is 75% wool and 25% true hemp in a chunky weight. This yarn is also currently on sale!

## Blocking Hemp Projects

From my research I have found that wet blocking is the best way to block a hemp yarn project. Treating it like linen will not only soften the project but also make it more durable and show off the projects characteristics. Personally I don't see why dry or steam blocking would harm a hemp yarn project, but I would err on the side of caution and try those methods on a separate swatch. It is also important to note that if you have a project with contrasting colors to be careful of the dye bleeding during the blocking process.

### WET BLOCKING

Materials include: Blocking pins, blocking mats, dry towel, basin of cool water. Use caution when using any type of detergent or wool wash

- \* Immerse your project completely in cool water.
  - \* Gently roll your wet project up in a dry towel and squeeze out any excess water
- DO NOT wring out your project by twisting. This will destroy your piece!**
- \* Lay out flat and shape your project (Pinning where needed). Any flat surface will work as long as you don't need that area for a day or two.
  - \* Let dry completely