

Knotty Lady YARN S

Get to Know Silk!

Silk is known as one of the most highly prized and sought after fibers for the last 5,000 years. Originally discovered in ancient China, silk was exclusively used for royalty, but desired by all. It wasn't until 300 AD that sericulture, or the production of silk, started spreading to Korea, Japan, and India. From there, the production and desire for silk products and fiber spread like wildfire. We have King James of England to thank for ordering silk to be brought over to the United States in 1603. Everyone was fighting over who produced the best silk until it was quickly learned that cotton and tobacco was a more profitably investment here in the United States.



What is silk made from?

Well, it is a matter of *who* makes silk. Silkworms are technically the silk moth in the pupa life cycle, scientifically known as Bombyx Mori. There is a variety of insects that can produce silk or silk like fibers, but have yet to be use for commercial purposes. Silk is one of the strongest fibers available. It is also highly durable, has a naturally reflective sheen, and absorbs dye well. Silk will be stronger the softer it is and does not like being stretched out.

Types of Silk!

Mulberry Silk - is the most common type of silk that is cultivated for commercial use. These silkworms are bred to produce fine white silk to make the dyeing process easier and more efficient.

Tussah or Wild Silk - also known as Peace or Ahimsa Silk. These are cocoons that are found naturally in the wild once the silkworm is done with it. These cocoons will often have holes from where the moths emerged and will not have many short strands. Because it is found naturally, this type of silk will be inconsistent in thickness and in how the dye takes.

Sea Silk - also known as Seacell. This type of silk is produced by bivalve clams and is not used commercially. Sea Silk is a more plant based fiber and often made with wood pulp and seaweed. This is exceptionally soft and great at holding shape and durability.

Silk Noil - this is where the leftovers go to be processed and used. It will have a more matte like appearance similar to cotton and will also have more imperfections.

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Silk production!

Like most of our other favorite fibers we find in store, we have to grow or nourish an animal in order to harvest their fibers for production. Silk is no different! A female silkworm survives long enough to lay between 300-400 eggs at a time. The eggs are kept in a controlled environment and then examined for diseases. The pin head sized eggs are then incubated for about 10 days before hatching into quarter inch long larva.

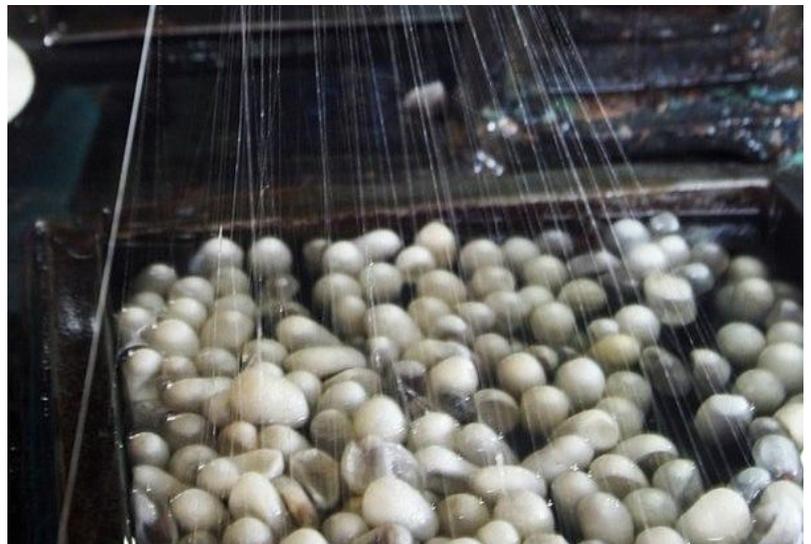
The larva are then fed a mixture of mulberry leaves, osage oranges or lettuce. These larva bring a new meaning to pigging out, since they will grow in size by 10,000 times in a very short amount of time. Once they reach their final size, in 28-30 days, they will start to spin a silk cocoon.



The silkworm will adventure out to find the perfect place on a stick, branch or shrub over the next 3-8 days. Silkworms have two openings, or spinnerets, one of which secretes fibroin which is a protein material, or silk thread. The second opening secretes sericin, a gummy binding fluid, that makes the thread stick together. Over the next 4 days the silkworm will rotate at least 300,000 times in a figure-8 motion to form the cocoon. The single strand of silk the worm is winding will be about 4,320 feet long or 1440 yards.

Making Silk Yarn!

The cocoon is treated with hot air, steam or boiling water. This softens the gummy binding fluid and cause the fibers to start to unwind. This process is also called **reeling the cocoon**. Between 4-8 cocoons are reeled at once, and sometimes will be slightly twisted, to start creating a single strand. Cocoons contain sericin which protects the silk fiber and can be washed out with soap and boiling water. Removing sericin makes the silk softer and 30% lighter. It takes about 2,500 silkworms to produce a round of raw silk.



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Silk Yarn Ideas!

Below is a small taste of silk yarn and blends that are available at Knotty Lady Yarns!



Berroco Mantra
100% Silk
182 Yards per Skein
DK Weight



Manos Del Uruguay Silk Blend
70% Extra Fine Merino Wool
& 30% Silk
150 Yards per Hank
DK Weight



Lang Yarns Mulberry Silk
100% Mulberry Silk
158 Yard per Skein
Sport Weight



Mountain Colors Winter Silk
50% Silk & 50% Wool
200 Yards per Hank
Worsted Weight



Shibui Silk Cloud
60% Kid Mohair & 40% Silk
330 Yards per Hank
Lace Weight

Blocking!

Never fear your amazing silk or silk blend project can be blocked, but not in your typical way! Silk doesn't like to stretch and if overstretched it will not recover completely. The spray bottle method we feel is the easiest and safest way to block silk projects. This is also a great method for other types of yarn that either needs light blocking or you are short on time. Below are the steps to block your silk project and please use caution when pinning to not pierce the yarn!!

1. Carefully pin down one side of your project onto blocking mats using pins and blocking wire.
 - Again be careful not to pierce the yarn. Go in between stitches.
2. Very gently stretch your project and pin...remember you can over stretch and ruin your masterpiece.
3. Gently spray with a room temperature water bottle until lightly damp, you can saturate specific areas more if needed
4. Let dry completely, remove pins and enjoy!