

Knitted Rag Rugs for the Craftsman

20th Anniversary Edition

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Rugmaker's Handbook No. 1

Knitted Rag Rugs for the Craftsman

20th Anniversary Edition
(revised)

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Master Rugmaker*

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Cocolalla, Idaho*

Rugmaker's Handbook No.2
Knitted Rag Rugs for the Craftsman
20th Anniversary Edition (revised)

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SHORT EXCERPTS FROM THE TEXT MAY BE PUBLISHED WHEN INCORPORATED IN A REVIEW. HOWEVER, CRAFT WRITERS AND EDITORS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT SEVERAL OF THE METHODS INCLUDED IN THIS BOOK, ARE PUBLISHED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME. DERIVATIVE ARTICLES AND WRITTEN WORKS MUST INCLUDE SPECIFIC CREDITS.

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Dedication:

To the members of my “advisory committee”
who have always been there.

Preface

I will never understand why knitted ‘rag’ rugs have not been more widely made. They are easy to make (simpler and faster than crocheted or braided rugs) and quite durable. I really like the portability of knitted rugs, too. Most are made in sections that can be taken along for pick up work so you don’t have to pack the entire rug around with you. The knitting is of the very simplest sort; the garter stitch can be used for all types of knitted rugs. Even if you are a beginning knitter, you will be able to make these rugs since only the most basic of knitting skills are needed.

Knitting with fabric strip has a unique feel that takes just a bit of getting used to. On the other hand, you get to make your own “yarn” from fabric. This adds a new creative element for even the most experienced knitter since each fabric looks and handles differently. Knitted rugs are not as heavy as crocheted or braided rugs, but they have a lot more body than the traditional woven rag rugs. Knitted rugs have a lovely springy texture underfoot and are easy to care for, making them ideal for use as accent rugs anywhere in the home.

It is likely that you already have the materials on hand to make knitted rag rugs and accessories. Old sheets, cast-off clothing, and even those fabrics that have been cluttering your sewing cupboard for years can be knitted into rugs.

In earlier editions of *Knitted Rag Rugs for the Craftsman*, I’d focused primarily on the creation of professional looking rugs for people who were particularly interested in going into the business of making rugs. This twentieth anniversary edition is greatly expanded with an eye to practicality. I’d found that many people were discouraged from rug making because of the time invested in preparing fabric strip. (With a professional quality rug, half of the time needed to make a rug is devoted just to cutting and folding fabric.) The simpler methods of fabric preparation in this edition will let knitted rugs fit more easily into a hectic lifestyle yet still be welcome additions to the home.

Acknowledgements

No book about textiles can be said to be the product of a single person. Each of us has learned from uncounted generations of textile workers reaching far into prehistory. I have to acknowledge the contributions to this book of many anonymous men and women who left behind their rugs for me to find and try to decipher. I thank my grandmothers who passed down their textile skills and wisdom in doing even a simple job well. I also must thank the many readers who have written to me over the past 20 years with their questions and requests for information. They are responsible for many improvements in this edition.

Finally, I want to thank Peter Collingwood in England for showing me that being a textile structuralist is at least a *respectable* form of insanity.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This isn't a "craft book"—instead it is a handbook for the textile explorer. I'm not going to show you a picture of just one rug and say "Now here are the directions. Just remake the very same rug that I did." Instead, I'm going to show you how the various processes work so that you can take it from there to create your own rugs in your own designs. You don't need to be a textile expert or even an experienced knitter to use this book. All you need is a sense of curiosity and a willingness to explore new methods of turning leftover fabric into a unique rug.

While knitting has been used to make rugs in many ways, only a few techniques were ever documented and those sketchily at best. In this volume, all of those have been brought together in one place for the purpose of preserving the techniques by encouraging you to practice these skills. This book is designed as a teaching tool and reference handbook for those interested in learning to knit rag rugs. It is information dense with rug making instructions for many traditional methods that have never appeared in print, as well as new ways to knit rugs.

As an example, the chapter on how to knit a shaggy rug includes directions for five different techniques. One method was only cryptically described in the 1920's. Another is a method for which examples date to the late 1800's, but for which no directions were ever published. The other three are the products of my own experimentation designed to make rug construction easier, create a more durable structure and have reliable results for beginning rug makers using modern fabrics.

In 1985 I wrote the first book ever published exclusively about knitted rag rugs and, indeed, the first book to mention the basic methods in nearly 50 years. Each subsequent edition of this book has increased the previous number of methods covered as over the past two decades more old rugs have come to light and, of course, I've gained in experience and knowledge—especially in applying knitting techniques to modern fabrics.

I often hear from people who are astonished to find out that there are so many types of rag rugs. It is my hope that with this book, people will be astonished to find out that there are so many different ways to *knit* a rag rug.

Part I is a guide to the various knitted rug constructions, variations and techniques. These chapters are organized so that a beginning knitter can start at Chapter 1 and work up gradually to more complex and interesting rug structures. Or, if you are an experienced knitter, you can just pick a chapter at random and start in with the technique that interests you the most.

Part II is the “Handbook” section with all of the general reference subjects in a single place. It includes everything from selecting and preparing various fabrics for knitting to caring for your knitted rug. The directions for the processes that are basic to all of the rugs (such as how to double-fold fabric strip) and alternatives for stitch patterns are also in Part II. Different methods of casting on and casting off are covered as well as how to produce various edge finishes to show off your rug.

As you progress through the rug making chapters, you may find yourself wanting to use a different fabric than the example rug or enlarge it in size, or make it with a different stitch pattern or texture. That is when you’ll find Part II very useful, and it is suggested that you look through the Handbook information just so that you know what is available there.

Due to the limitations of the printing process, the illustrations are more limited than I would have liked, but if you want to learn to knit rag rugs this is the book for you. Use this book as your guide to making knitted rugs and don’t be afraid to try out different combinations as your own creativity suggests.

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