

Bog Baby Vest

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STRUCTURE

Sprang.

EQUIPMENT

30" sprang frame, 10" weaving width; shed sticks or weaving sword.

YARNS

Warp: worsted-weight cotton (about 850 yd/lb), 138 yd.

OTHER SUPPLIES

2 beads; large button for shoulder closure.

WARP LENGTH

80 figure-eight loops (160 threads) 30" long (allows 2" for take-up, 8" for loom waste; loom waste includes fringe).

You may have never heard of it, but you've probably seen sprang many times before in shopping bags and hammocks. This ancient technique has been used for millennia to create clothing and accessories. Sprang textiles have been found with human remains in Scandinavian peat bogs, clothing Egyptian mummies, in ancient Peruvian burial mounds, and worn as military sashes in 18th and 19th century Europe. Sprang weaving has been depicted on early Greek vases.

Sprang is a braided or plaited structure in which one warp thread (or threads) is twisted around another. There is no weft. When sprang is done on a frame, whatever twist pattern the weaver creates at one end of the frame will be mirrored on the other end. Two rows of fabric for every one worked!

I have been exploring sprang for many years, and when I decided to write a book on this technique, *Sprang Unsprung*, I went in search of a North American example that would inspire my readers. I found a stunning piece at the Arizona State Museum. It is an intricately patterned cotton shirt that dates to between 1000 and 1200 A.D., well before Christopher Columbus's famous voyage. The front of the shirt is a mirror image of the back. This shirt inspired me to make a sprang shirt for myself, and I spent a couple of weeks making small vests as samplers to test my techniques. This child's vest is a result of those experiments. It's cute as a button, and it's a project you can finish before baby grows out of it. Remember, for the work of creating the front of this vest, you get the back automatically!

RESOURCES

Collingwood, Peter. *The Techniques of Sprang*. New York: Watson-Guptill, 1974.

James, Carol. *Sprang Unsprung*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Carol James, 2011.

"Interlinking Weaving 1," YouTube video. <http://youtu.be/CIVhCyQjodo>

WARPING

- 1 Set your frame so that it is oriented sideways (30" will be the side-to-side measurement) at a comfortable working height.
- 2 Slide a bead onto the end of your warping yarn as a selvedge marker.
- 3 Tie your yarn low on the left crossbar.
- 4 Begin to warp by wrapping your yarn side to side in a figure-8 pattern: Wind from the lower left to the right across the

width, behind the right crossbar, around to the front, across the width, behind the left crossbar, around to the front and repeat. Repeat 80 times for a total of 160 warp threads, 80 in front and 80 behind.

- 5 After 80 repeats, cut your yarn. Add a bead to your last warp thread and tie high on the left crossbar.
- 6 Rotate your frame so that the warp runs vertically with a bead on the right and left selvedge threads. Make sure that your rightmost thread is a front thread.

WEAVING

- 1 **Work initial row:**
 - Slide your left hand into the shed, then use your right hand to pick up the first back thread from the right side of the loom while pushing the front thread (your right bead thread) to the back. Be careful not to twist the marker bead into the row.
 - Work your way across the warp, crossing threads in pairs. The last back thread to be picked up will be your left bead thread. Always begin by lifting a back thread.
 - Push the twist up to the top of the frame and down to the bottom as evenly as possible, maintaining the new shed with your hand. Insert a weaving sword or a holding stick into the shed and leave it at the bottom of the warp to hold the twist. You may also insert a heavy safety cord into the shed in the center of your warp and anchor it to the sides of your frame. (See Resources.) The safety cord is removed and reinserted every time you create a new shed, serving as a placeholder and enabling you to return to your last shed if you make a mistake.

- 2 **Work plait row:**
 - Slide your left hand back into the shed.
 - Pick up the first 2 back threads from the right side (1 will be a beaded thread) and move the first front thread to the back. The first stitch on a plait row always involves 3 threads.
 - Proceed across the warp using plain stitches (picking up 1 back thread and pushing 1 front thread back).
 - When you come to the end of your row, you will pick up the last back thread and push 2 front threads to the back (1 will be

a beaded thread). Remove your safety cord from the last shed and reinsert it while keeping your right hand in your new shed.

- Remove the weaving sword from the last shed and use it to beat the twist into the new shed. Leave it in place in the new shed.

3 Work overplait row: Work plain stitches across the entire row.

4 Weave alternating plait and overplait rows until the bottom and top fabrics are 10" long, measuring to make sure that the bottom and top fabrics are beaten evenly. To keep track of the plait/overplait sequence, pay attention to the position of the selvedge bead. If the bead is down on your right selvedge, the next row will be a plait row. If the bead is up, the next row will be an overplait row.

FINISHING

- 1 The 8" of untwisted warp between the upper and lower fabric will be your fringe. Cut the untwisted warp threads between the upper and lower fabric 10 threads at a time, remove selvedge beads and knot firmly at both edges. You will have 16 knots at the fringe edge of each of these two pieces.
- 2 Remove the pieces from the frame by untying your selvedge threads and sliding the loops off of the frame.
- 3 Use a crochet hook to chain the loops on both pieces. The last loop on one piece can be secured as a button loop, and the last loop on the second piece can be sewn in place as the button is attached. These will be at the right shoulder of the vest.
- 4 Place the pieces together matching button loop and button, then sew a shoulder seam along left shoulder. Sew side seams by starting at the fringe and sewing for 7", leaving a 3" armhole opening. 