

# Rounded Arches Spindle Bag

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Photos by Matt Graves

Use handspun yarn to stitch a swath of your favorite bargello pattern to accent a soft-sided spindle bag made from cotton velveteen.

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*There are many fun and* useful projects to make with bargello needlepoint—pillows, chair seats, purses, book covers, pincushions—but the perfect project for a handspinner is a spindle bag.

Bargello stitching offers endless opportunities for experimenting with color, yarns, and patterns. I have chosen the traditional Rounded Arches pattern, but any pattern of your choice is fine. The needlepoint area to be worked is a rectangle, approximately 8 by 11 inches. Simple repeating shapes allow you to repeat contrasting colors for a more modern look, work in a gradient of colors (which spinners love), or work in a more monochromatic palette and explore different fibers.

*Editor's note: Linda's article, "Bargello: A Renaissance Art with a Twist," in Spin Off Spring 2022 includes loads of pattern and color ideas.*

## SPINNING NOTES

Modern millspun needlepoint yarns (100% wool and often referred to as Persian yarn) are used for bargello because they provide good coverage, preventing the mesh canvas from showing through the work. These yarns have a firm twist, so they are durable. Typically, several plied yarns are loosely twisted, with each plied yarn referred to as a "ply" by many needleworkers. Two "plies" are ideal for normal mesh ranges.

For handspinners, the norms can go out the window. We can get creative with ply structure, gauge, and fiber choices. Coarse fibers and firm twist create a durable textile, while finer fibers and nontraditional yarn structures might feed your creative explorations. Creating small, stitched swatches on mesh will help you quickly judge yarn, color, and pattern choices.

For my bag, I used handspun two-ply Merino wool in sunflower yellow. The worsted-weight handspun yarn has a firm twist in both singles and ply. I chose to pair this with a navy millspun yarn from my stash.

## MATERIALS

**Fiber** 100% Merino wool, 2 oz (57 g).

**Yarn** 2-ply; 75 yd MC; 1,000 ypp; 12 wpi; worsted weight; handspun by Kelly McKenzie of Cedar Valley Fibers. Maine Line DK 3/8 (100% wool; 1,490 yd/lb; Jagger Spun; worsted spun), 75 yd CC, Navy.

**Notions** 11" × 14" piece of cotton mesh canvas #12; 12" × 24" piece of cotton velveteen (other fabric with a firm weave can be used, such as Ultrasuede, corduroy, etc.); 14" zipper, color to match fabric; 1½ yd sturdy ¼" cording; cord stopper to fit cord; tapestry needle (round blunt end, elongated eye), size 22; small scissors; straight pins; zipper foot (optional); sewing needle and thread.

**Finished Size** 10" circumference × 21".

## Handspun Tips

Here are some guidelines that will help you avoid disappointment and stressed hands as you explore:

- The yarn must flow through the holes in the mesh canvas easily, otherwise, it will wear out your fingers and the yarn, not to mention your patience. There are different sizes of mesh, so you can adjust the yarn weight and surface texture accordingly.
- The yarn must be thin enough to thread on a tapestry or yarn needle. I've done some makeshift "needles" to accommodate thicker yarns—bobby pins and even a turkey lacer.
- Choose yarns that don't kink or have a predisposition for knotting. Yarns that fray easily when cut into short lengths can also be challenging.
- Yarns with some variation in gauge (thick and thin) are fine, but extreme variations in gauge might lead to the canvas showing through the work.



## INSTRUCTIONS

Using masking tape, tape around all sides of the cotton mesh canvas, folding the tape in half over the raw edges.

Refer to the Rounded Arches stitch chart on page 4. You will see that it is a 4:2 pattern (covers 4 holes with a 2-hole step). The first row is the foundation row. It is the most important and will take accuracy and patience! Once you have this row set, the rest will fall into place easily. Just in case, bargello stitches can be undone by picking out individual stitches with your needle.

Start approximately 1½" above the longer bottom edge and 1½" in from the right edge (the bottom right corner of the stitching area). Cut an 18–24" length of MC and thread your tapestry needle. To begin your first vertical stitch (A on the chart), insert the needle from under the canvas and bring the needle up toward you. Draw the yarn up, leaving a tail of about 1". Press this tail against the back of the canvas in the direction of the

few stitches so that the tail will be caught and secured as you stitch. Pay close attention to the chart on this first row as you work from right to left, following the chart blocks (over 4 meshes for the vertical stitch, then up [or down] 2 meshes for the step as the chart indicates).

Continue until you are 1½" from the left edge. Secure the yarn on the back by weaving it under a few stitches. The next row (CC) begins in the top mesh hole of the first stitch where you began at A, then continues in the same pattern as the foundation row. Fill the entire canvas in this manner, alternating colors for each row. Stay in pattern as you stitch at the top and fill in at the bottom, keeping edges straight.

To block, steam lightly to maintain a rectangular shape. Dry thoroughly.

## BAG ASSEMBLY

Trim the canvas mesh so there is a ¾" seam allowance around the bargello stitching.



Linda used two-ply wool yarns and cotton mesh canvas.





A zipper keeps your spinning gear in place.

Steam-press the seam allowances toward the wrong side so there is a smooth and straight rectangle (8" x 11") of only the bargello stitching showing.

Place the bargello on top of the right side of the velveteen fabric. It can be centered (6½" from top and bottom and 2" from long edges) or offset vertically as shown. Secure with pins. Topstitch close to the edges all around.

Fold lengthwise with right sides together. Beginning 6½" from one end, baste a ⅝" seam down the center for 14", leaving 6½" on either end unstitched. Press the seam open. Center the closed zipper, face down, on the wrong side over the seam allowances. Stitch down the zipper tape approximately ⅜" from the

teeth. Turn right side out, slit the basting stitches, and test the zipper.

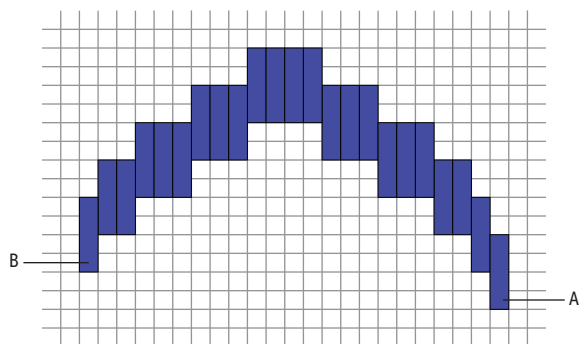
Turn the bag wrong side out again. Sew the remaining above and below the zipper using ⅝" seams, stopping 2" from each end. Press the seams open, including the 2" left unsewn. Turn the bag right side out.

To form a channel for the cording, turn ¼" of the raw top edge of the velveteen inward, then turn in again 1". Pin. Stitch close to the folded bottom edge to form the channel. Do the same for the opposite end.

**Top cord:** Thread 1 yd of the cording through the top channel. Thread the cord through the stopper. Make secure knots at the ends of the cord.

**Bottom cord:** Thread ½ yd of the cording through the lower channel. Pull tight, make a secure knot, and cut off remaining cording (or make it into a tassel, if desired). ●

Figure 1. Rounded Arches Chart



### Resources

Perry, Linda M. *Back to Bargello: A Collection of Colorful Techniques and Patterns*. Self-published, 2014, 23.

A lifelong lover of all things fiber, **Linda M. Perry** now lives and creates on an island on the Maine coast. Several years ago, with the hope of reigniting the art and craft of bargello needlepoint, she wrote a primer book, *Back to Bargello*.