

Arsenic & Old Lace: Vintage Knit Afghan

Designed by Mary Ellen Langieri for Summit Yarn Studio

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Summit Yarn Studio

276 East Grove Street, Clarks Green, PA, 18411 (570)586-6985

This afghan is designed entirely from knit patterns dating at least from the late 1800's. Many of these patterns were published in a magazine entitled: "Weldon's Practical Knitter", featuring knit articles of clothing and pieces for the home. The entire afghan requires 3300 yards of worsted weight yarn and is knit at a gauge of 18 stitches and 24 rows to four inches in Stockinette Stitch on US8 (5mm) needles. You will also need 4 large stitch holders and a tapestry needle. Each square is intended to be 10 inches square, making the finished afghan big enough to fit a queen size bed.

The original concept was to either do the afghan all in one color (and many knitters chose crème for this option) or to do it in three colors. There are four strips of five blocks each, so you would alternate one of two colors for the blocks creating a checkerboard (or quiltlike) appearance; and use the third color for the three insertions, between each square, and for the knit on border at the end. Of course, every square could be a different color...this is your artwork, so make this project your own by making your color choice(s) quite personal.

You can also choose to knit each square separately and join them later or knit one after the next in a strip of squares. I have alternated in the design by doing one lace square followed by a more solid knit/purl square...keeping the weight of the afghan more even and balancing the stitches in an appropriate manner. As I release each square I will do so in the order the afghan was designed and let you know when each strip is complete and ready to be put on a stitch holder (we will be keeping the top edge stitches "live" to make knitting on the border at the end just a little easier).

SQUARE NUMBER ONE: Shell Pattern

This lace pattern was used in Weldon's in 1899 in the round for a child's first sock. It is an example of true knit lace, where the work is done on every row. (Historically, "lacey knitting" refers to lacework in which the yarnovers are only worked every other row.)

CAST ON 45 STITCHES by knit-on method and work five rows in seed stitch (*K1, P1; repeat from * to last stitch, end K1). Then repeat the following rows:

Row 1: Seed 5, *P1, YO, K1, P1, SKP, K3; repeat from * to last 8 sts, end P1, YO, K1, P1, Seed 5.(46sts)

Row 2: (WRONG SIDE ROW) Seed 5, K1, P2, YO, K1, *P2, P2tog Through The Back Loops (TBL), K1, P2, YO, K1; repeat from * to the last 5 sts, Seed 5.(47sts)

Row 3: Seed 5, *P1, YO, K3, P1, SKP, K1; repeat from * to the last 10 sts, end P1, YO, K3, P1, Seed 5. (48sts)

Row 4: Seed 5, K1, P4, YO, K1, *P2togTBL, K1, P4, YO, K1; repeat from * to the last five sts, Seed 5. (49sts)

Row 5: Seed 5, *P1, K5, P1, K1; repeat from * to the last 12 sts, end P1, K5, P1, Seed 5. (49sts)

Row 6: Seed 5, K1, P3, P2togTBL, K1, *P1, YO, K1, P3, P2togTBL, K1; repeat from * to the last five stitches, Seed 5. (48sts)

Row 7: Seed 5, *P1, SKP, K2, P1, YO, K2; repeat from * to the last 11 sts, end P1, SKP, K2, P1, Seed 5. (47sts)

Row 8: Seed 5, K1, P1, P2togTBL, K1, *P3, YO, K1, P1, P2togTBL, K1; repeat from * to the last five stitches, Seed 5. (46sts)

Row 9: Seed 5, *P1, SKP, P1, YO, K4; repeat from the * to the last 9 sts, end P1, SKP, P1, Seed 5.(45sts)

Row 10: Seed 5, K1, P1, K1, *P5, K1, P1, K1; repeat from * to the last 5 stitches, Seed 5.(45sts)

Repeat rows 1-10 until the piece measures 9.25 inches from the cast on edge and end by completing Row 10, then Seed 5 rows, pat yourself on the back because this was the most challenging square of the whole afghan, and wait for the next square to be released on my blog!xox theHumanLoom



Abbreviations: K = KNIT, P = PURL, YO = YARNOVER, P2tgoTBL = Purl 2 sts tog thru the back loops, SKP=slip one stitch as if to knit, knit the next stitch and pass the slipped stitch over the knit stitch.

