

## ORGANIZING YOUR YARN STASH

Last Saturday we got to see some of the Guild members stash and how they have it organized.

Here's a recap of Teresa's system for organizing her stash:

*"I take a disorganized organized approach. When I buy yarn, I put it in an organza bag with a cedar chip and tuck it into any of my labeled bins or my project cabinet. The project cabinet is for yarn I know I want use soon and already know what I'm going to make with it. The rest goes into bins that are just labeled A, B, C, etc. I throw the yarn into whatever bin has room because creating bins for certain types/weights of yarn is problematic for me. I want to keep as few bins as possible, but if I label by yarn type/weight, I end up with half-full bins of some types and overflowing of others and that's irksome."*

*"But, I also like being organized and able to lay my hands on a specific skein of yarn without having to dig through multiple bins. So, I leverage a Ravelry stash field titled "location." When I put yarn away, I also put it in my stash in Ravelry and fill in the location. Sometimes, I'm too busy to get it into Ravelry right away but I want to put the yarn away, so I take pictures of the yarn and label, making sure I can see all the details (weight, yardage, dye lot, etc.). When I get around to it, I use the pics to put the yarn in Ravelry and then delete the pics to keep me from trying to put it in there twice."*

We are all fiber lovers just like Teresa. When we first started our stash collection it all fit into a small box or basket. But now most of us might have yarn in every nook and cranny you can find in your house and sometimes in the trunk of your car.

Organizing your stash might not be a quick task. Depending on the system you select, it could take you several days, but what a difference it will make!

Yarn storage should do three things: keep yarn protected, easily accessible, and nicely displayed (optional).

When storing your yarn there are a few things that you should seriously consider:

1. Yarn needs to breathe. Don't store yarn in plastic bags--at least not for the long term. Depending on the fiber, yarn can hold up to 30% of its weight in moisture without feeling wet. Cotton yarn can mold if stored in plastic bags and you live in a humid climate.

For easy to grab bags try using mesh, canvas, or organza bags. Do like Teresa and toss in cedar or lavender to prevent moths or bugs. If you can't smell the fragrance, replace it as it's no longer working. If you use moth balls, make sure they do not come in direct contact with the yarn. You should consider that the off-gas emitted can actually damage your yarn, not to mention what you have to do to rid the yarn of the moth ball smell.

2. A room with big windows and lots of sunlight may not be your best yarn storage room. It's really good for sitting and knitting. Direct sunlight can cause colors to fade and weaken the strength of the fibers. To store your yarn correctly, the best way is to keep it in a ventilated area and away from direct sunlight. Wherever you store your yarn, make sure it's in a climate-controlled environment, not in a damp basement or a hot attic.

3. If you store yarn in baskets, it's a good idea to not sit the basket on a rug or carpeting; the reason being that some regions have carpet beetles.

There are many ways to organize your stash. It's what will work best for you. Teresa uses Ravelry while others use shared that they use Excel spreadsheets. You might just have folders on your computer where you record your yarn purchase. Taking pictures of the yarn is always good. If you have a project in mind, print off the pattern and keep it with the yarn. Or place a note with the yarn that the pattern is in a notebook, a drawer, or in your Ravelry library.

Some additional overall thoughts:

1. As you are sorting your yarn, pay close attention to how the yarn makes you feel. It's a possibility that you will come across yarn that you are no longer in love with. At the time you purchased the yarn, you might have had a project in mind. Now looking at the project and the yarn, you might decide: No way do I want to do this project or do I want to use this yarn. Put this yarn in a box for donation or to give away. It's really okay for you to do this.

2. It's not always a bargain to buy yarn at garage sales unless you take a serious look at the yarn. If it smells musty or breaks when you pull on it, do not buy it. The yarn could be old, hasn't been stored properly, and could have uninvited critters coming home with you. It's really not a bargain.

3. If you find moths in your yarn, consider throwing the yarn out immediately. Some say that you can put the yarn in the freezer for a month or two to kill the moths. It has been found that the eggs are not killed by freezing. To be on the safe side, you need to throw out the yarn. Yes, it's a hard thing to do, but it's the only way to completely get rid of the bugs. You should also thoroughly clean the area where the yarn had been stored.

It is important to remember that textile insects such as carpet beetles and clothes moths can digest protein fibers such as wool, silk, and specialty hair fibers, but they can also be found on synthetic fibers if they contain protein substances.

4. Use a yarn winder to make skeins smaller, as the resulting cakes take up as much as 30% less space. Then you can go buy more yarn.

5. If you choose to use Ravelry for your yarn inventory and are tempted to buy some more yarn, you can access Ravelry on your phone wherever you are and see if you might already have some of it. How many times have you purchased the same yarn more than once?

6. Having your yarn purchase information available including pictures of the yarn, is a good idea if there was significant damage, such as a fire or flood. The cost could possibly be covered under your homeowner or rental insurance; check with your insurance company. Whatever system you use, you will see that yarn can tie up a significant amount of money.

7. Keep your Planned Project box where you can see it. You might be more likely to work from it if it's easy to get to. As you come across new projects, your first stop is your stash bins. With all your gorgeous yarns, you might not have what you need or want for the pattern. Time to go shopping!