

February 2009 Newsletter

Textiles 101 – Yard Dyes, Textured Weaves, and Herringbone...

These three things may not sound like they have anything in common...but they do. They are all related in the type of thread used in the weaving process. All of these fabrics use pre-dyed yards to weave patterns, designs and colors into the finished fabric.

Yard Dyes (also known as Homespun) are a plaid woven fabric. The design of the plaid is created by using different colors of thread in the weaving process. They are more loosely woven than your regular mercerized print-dyed cottons, so it gives it a unique look. They often are used for country and down-home looks in quilting patterns. Very fun to work with, but difficult to unpick – If you make an error in machine quilting on homespun – it won't be fun or easy to unpick. It is easy to pull on the fabric threads while unpicking a homespun fabric – especially if you have used a thread stronger than the cotton fabric (this means that the fabric fibers will break before the sewing thread fibers will). Homespun are good fabric to use as stash builders, because they can be mixed and matched easily. One of my favorite quilts is made out of homespun in bright colors – no need to match – because the style creates the continuity.

Textured Weaves are a different sort of fabrics that can be made from any type of fiber. These fabrics are also made with different colors of thread instead of printing. Unlike a smooth quilting cotton fabric, textured weaves have more body and intricate designs. It can be a fun idea to use as a background fabric to add dimension. Some manufacturers will make textured weaves that match with yarn dyes, creating an array of items that are fun and different to work with. This particular fabric pictured has a woven criss-cross pattern in the fabric weave. It adds a tactile dimension to your quilt.

Herringbone weave is a broken-twill weave that gives a zigzag effect. It is created by using two different colors of thread in one fabric. Often used in clothing, it is also produced as a quilting fabric. It is a strong print that would best be suited for a backing or a dynamic project such as a two tone quilt. It will add a variety and texture to a quilt that plain printed fabric cannot. The picture below is an example of a herringbone print (so named because it resembles the skeleton of a herring).