

## GCW 2019 Samples

### Basket Weave Part I: Fall

What's in a name? Sometimes, in the weaving world, a lot of confusion. It seems especially true for the plain weave class of structures which is generally defined to encompass basket weave and (sometimes) canvas weave.

For those of us who take comfort in and derive a measure of understanding from classification, I give you Harriet Tidball's definition<sup>1</sup>: the Basket Weave System describes “the balanced Plain Weaves in which alternate groups of threads are up and down in both warp and weft. The warp and weft groups must be identical in number as well as in spacing. Baskets may be 2-thread, 3-thread, 4-thread or they may be in fancy combinations.”

In the U.K., our 2-thread basket weave structure is called hopsack. Ann Sutton<sup>2</sup> reserves the basket weave name for a plain weave structure in which either the warp or the weft is “doubled up” but not both warp and weft.

In comparison with “tabby” cloth, Zielinski<sup>3</sup> describes basket weave cloth as softer, warmer, and easier draped, but much weaker. The bigger the basket, the longer the floats, the weaker the cloth. Interlacement manipulations that counteract that weakness lead to interesting textiles. Our fall and winter samples explore two examples.

In *The Weaver's Book*<sup>4</sup>, Tidball says (without further explanation) that “commercial monk's cloth is an example of 4-thread basket weave.” Davison, presumably describing the same commercial monk's cloth, claimed it was a popular drapery cloth, being “durable and inexpensive.” This description is seemingly at odds with our concept of 4-thread basket weave until one realizes that Davison is talking about canvas weave. With two of the four threads acting as corner ties to stabilize the long “basket” floats, a durable, draped curtain is more easily imagined.

Another way to stabilize the baskets is to insert a pair of tabby threads between each of the 2- 3- or 4-thread units. An example by Ulla Cyrus-Zetterström<sup>5</sup> has threading and treadling as 1 2 111 2 1 222 (repeat). She says that this basket structure is called “English tabby.” The technique is particularly effective when the tabby threads are substantially finer than the basket threads. See, for example, the Shuswap Spinners & Weavers thick and thin sample in *The Bulletin* from 2017.

Our fall sample is a 6-shaft thick and thin basket weave variant from Harriet Tidball<sup>6</sup> (p. 11, interlacement 12). She calls it a “reinforced design” with two threads in strong contrast. We used her threading but changed the treadling order to produce a firmer fabric for placemats.

With Tidball's treadling, and the sett opened to 14 epi, the 8/4 and 8/2 cottons produce a soft, drapable fabric that might be suitable for a jacket. Its appearance is substantially modified with the thin thread much less prominent. To get Tidball's design using our tie-up, the treadle order becomes 1 5555 3 4 2222 6.

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1 Tidball, Harriet, 1957. *The Handloom Weaves*. HTH Publishers, Santa Ana, CA.

2 Sutton, Ann, 1982. *The Structure of Weaving*. Lark Books, Ashville, NC

3 Zielinski, S.A., 1979. *Master Weaver Vol 1: A Treasury for Beginners*. Nilus Leclerc Inc., L'Islet, QC

4 Tidball, Harriet, 1961. *The Weaver's Book*. The Macmillan Company, New York.

5 Cyrus-Zetterström, Ulla, 1984. *Manual of Swedish Handweaving*. Lts förlag, Stockholm.

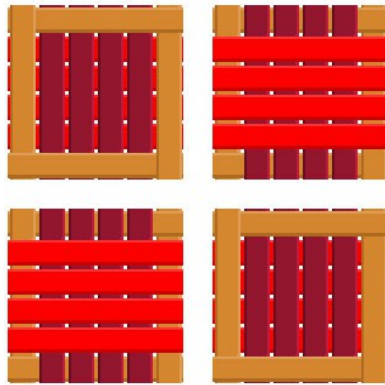
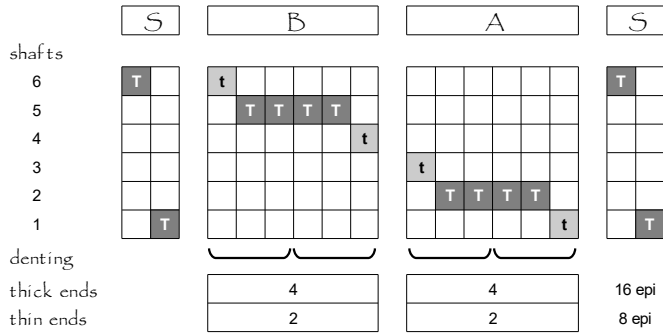
6 Tidball, Harriet, 1961. *Surface Interest: Textiles of Today*. Shuttle Craft Monograph 2. HTH Publishers, Freeland, WA

# Salt Spring Island Weavers & Spinners Guild

## GCW Sample 3: Fall 2019

### a cotton placemat

### in a thick & thin basket weave variation

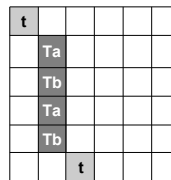


Note: thick & thin not drawn to scale

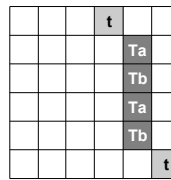


Alternating pattern units A and B in both threading and treading form an all-over pattern. About three repeats of the selvedge (S) threading provides a stable edging.

In an 8-dent reed, the warp thread groups in each dent are two thick (T) and one thin (t).



Alternate thick weft picks (Ta, Tb) are two closely related colours. We wound the yarns on separate bobbins and used a double-bobbin shuttle to insert both colours at the same time.



The beat must be very firm on the thin weft picks.

Pattern source: H. Tidball, 1961.

Surface Interest: Textiles of Today. Shuttle Craft Monograph 2, pattern 12, p. 11 (threading only).

Warp: 8/4 cotton (5115 wine) 1680 yd/lb

8/2 cotton (1391 sierra) 3360 yd/lb

Weft: 8/4 cotton (5156 burgundy) 1680 yd/lb

8/4 cotton (5193 raspberry) 1680 yd/lb

8/2 cotton (1391 sierra) 3360 yd/lb

Yarn source: Maurice Brassard & Fils Inc

<http://www.mbrassard.com>

Sett: 16 epi thick + 8 epi thin; beat to square

Take-up & shrinkage in length: 16%

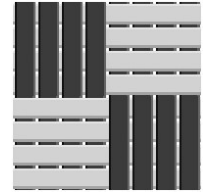
Draw-in & shrinkage in width: 16%

## Basket Weave Part 2: Winter

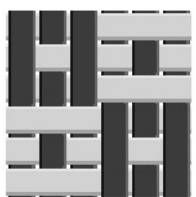
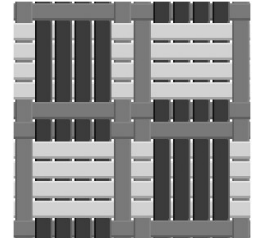
Basically, there are two ways to stabilize the large basket weaves: by tying the corners or by stitching the centre. To illustrate the difference, let's look at the 4-thread basket configuration.



By reversing the interlacement at each corner we can preserve the central 4-thread floats, but stabilize the unit substantially. This arrangement is classic canvas weave (see the 2019 spring and summer samples).

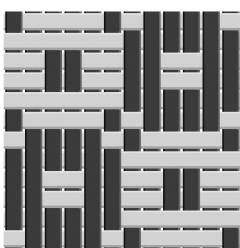
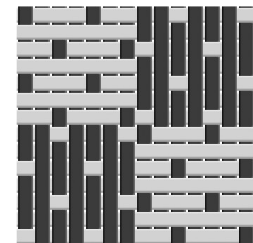


An alternative approach is to add a pair of tie-down threads between each basket unit which act in opposition to each other and to the adjacent basket unit. Typically, the tie threads are quite a bit thinner than the basket float threads. The simplest configuration, shown here, requires only 2 shafts; variations on 4 or 6 shafts can be found in Tidball<sup>7</sup> (see also the 2019 fall sample on previous page).



Stitched basket weave has the same stability objective, but it is achieved in quite a different way. The exact method depends on the size of the basket unit, and governs how many shafts are needed. With just 3 threads, the middle thread is available as a stitch in the centre of each unit. With 4 threads, both the second and third threads can be used alternately as stitches (see sample on next page, which adapts a draft by Ulla Cyrus-Zetterström<sup>8</sup>).

A rather unique extension of this idea can be found in *The Key to Weaving*<sup>9</sup> (p. 365) wherein Mary Black describes a stitched 7-thread unit as “the true basket weave.” There are 8 stitches per unit, 6 on the edges and just 2 interior ones. It is a 6-shaft design, which might contribute to its lack of widespread adoption. The illustration in Black's book shows an interesting fabric that might be mistaken for a 3-thread basket weave: the central stitch threads are nearly invisible, while the edge ones outline and emphasize the basket units.



Another novel design from Berta Frey<sup>10</sup> (p. 18) could be viewed as using both tied and stitched techniques. The overall unit is a 6-thread basket, tied on the corners in the conventional way, with a 2-thread basket unit as the central “stitching.” A few years ago, we played successfully with this design using wool singles and an open sett to make machine-felted hot pads.

We hope that some of you are tempted to investigate basket and canvas weaves a little further. They really do push the boundaries of plain weave. It's been an interesting and educational year for us, and we thank the Guild of Canadian Weavers for the opportunity to share our exploration.

7 Tidball, Harriet, 1961. *Surface Interest: Textiles of Today*. Shuttle Craft Monograph 2. HTH Publishers, Freeland, WA

8 Cyrus-Zetterström, Ulla, 1984. *Manual of Swedish Handweaving*. Lts förlag, Stockholm.

9 Black, Mary, 1980. *The Key to Weaving*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised Edition. Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York.

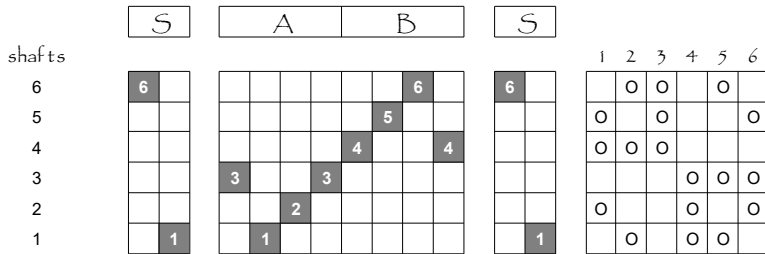
10 Frey, Berta, 1958. *Designing and Drafting for Handweavers*. Collier Books, New York.

# Salt Spring Island Weavers & Spinners Guild

## GCW Sample 4: Winter 2019

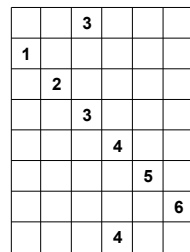
### a wool blanket

### in a stitched basket weave variation



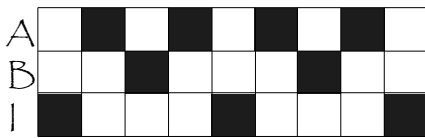
This sample is a 4|4 basket weave with two staggered stitches in the centre.

The resulting cloth is lofty and warm, but its thickness restricts its drape somewhat.

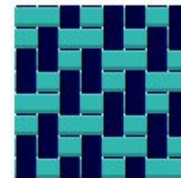


On exactly the same threading, an entirely different fabric is achieved just by omitting the 3 & 4 treadles (i.e., 1-2-5-6 repeat). The resulting twill cloth is considerably thinner and beautifully supple.

Threading for Sample



I is an incidental thread on shaft 4 which is also treadled on treadle 4



Pattern source: U. Cyrus-Zetterström, Manual of Swedish Handweaving, p. 16.

Warp: 2-ply Québécoise wool 985 yd/lb (48 navy)  
 Weft: 2-ply Québécoise wool 985 yd/lb (41 blue or 47 turquoise)

Yarn source: Maurice Brassard & Fils Inc  
<http://www.mbrassard.com>

Sett: 8 epi; beat 8 ppi

Take-up & shrinkage in length: approx. 20%

Draw-in & shrinkage in width: approx. 20%