

through Virginia to Asheville, North Carolina for the Southeast Animal Fiber Fair. This is our bittersweet farewell for both these events. We will miss our loyal customers and friends, but our bodies will be relieved of the stress and strain of packing and setting up for these events. We have been vending at these two shows and teaching at SAFF for nearly 20 years.

Yes, we ARE planning to vend at the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival one more time, spring of 2011, mainly to promote the *Continuous Strand Weaving Method* book which will be off the press by then! We are planning workshops and book promotions in Kentucky and New York shortly thereafter. Continue to check our web site and our spring newsletter for details. If you would like to schedule a workshop or presentation on the Continuous Strand Weaving Method (or Navajo Weaving) in your area, please contact me at 1-800-874-9328 (TRI-WEAV).

And yes, I do plan to continue attending the 10-day living history fur trader rendezvous. Even though the set-up is physically strenuous, the pace of the event is slower. After all, the time period is 1640 to 1840 — no electricity or phones, and all that comes with that! It's a time for me to slow down and enjoy a slower life-style, some time to teach and to create, to participate in the Highland Games, and to enjoy period music and good friends. See contact information on page 11.

DYER SITUATION, News on the Natural Dye Front:

Cochineal prices have tripled in the past few months for several reasons, all based on supply and demand. Europe has legislated that no synthetic red dyes may be used for food coloring. Cochineal is the safe red food dye of choice. The Fashion industry in China, Japan, and South Korea is desiring cochineal red. The cochineal crop in Central and South America has been devastated by severe flooding this growing season. And, there's a rumor which dismays me that some chemical company has invested in large cochineal plantations and plowed them under to weaken the competition of natural dyes with petroleum-based synthetic dyes.

For those who aren't familiar with it, Cochineal is a small scaled insect which is raised on prickly pear cactus as a parasite. It is scraped off the cactus and dried for use and export. Cochineal was used by the Aztec and became the most important red dye in Europe after Spain discovered South America. It has always been the most expensive dye available, the price moving up and down based upon supply and demand.

We DO have a source for cochineal and plan to keep it in stock, even at the higher price.

Brazilwood Chips for reds and purples are no longer available due to destruction of the rainforests in Central and South America. I have heard through a source that the Peruvian consulate claims there is a project under way to establish Brazilwood plantations. It will take quite a few years before the trees are large enough to harvest. However, we have **Brazilwood Extract** and **Recycled Brazilwood Sawdust** here at the Studio.

NEW DYE PRODUCTS: Instant Indigo and Indigo Dye Kit.

Instant Indigo is a form of indigo already reduced, then freeze-dried. Just mix with water and you are good to go! Regular **Indigo** vat dyeing is different from other dye processes. The regular Indigo vat needs to be chemically balanced before the Indigotin (white indigo) will properly attach to the surface of the fiber and turn blue when oxidized by air without crocking off. The vat balancing requires reduction (removing of oxygen from the dye bath) and raising the alkaline balance to between pH of 10 and 11, depending upon the type of fibers being dyed. **Instant Indigo** is already balanced, just mix with water. If the bath becomes "tired" (too much oxygen added during the dipping of fibers) let the bath rest to rebalance itself. A little Thiox (oxygen remover) may need to be added after the vat has been used sufficiently.

Speaking of **Indigo**, **Bex of True Blue Fiber Friends** has developed an **Indigo Dye Kit** (\$38) with all the ingredients and recipes for two different indigo vats: one for shibori and tie-dye resist dyeing on cotton and silk using synthetic indigo with zinc and lime, and the other for immersion dyeing of protein (animal) fibers using powdered natural indigo with Thiox and lye. There are enough ingredients to dye more than four pounds of fibers. The kit is available through TBFF or Hillcreek Fiber Studio.

ANOTHER NEW DYE PRODUCT: Mungeet (*Rubia cordifolia*) **Madder Root** from India. I haven't had an opportunity to try this yet. It consists of more purpurin for more red/purple color.