



by Clara Parkes

The premise of this column has always been that I would pick one garment, something that has piqued my knitterly curiosity for one reason or another, and see what happens if I bypass the recommended yarn and try something different. My goal has never been to *tell* you what yarns to substitute, but, rather, to get you thinking about yarns in a different, broader, more experimental way.

Sometimes, the projects Kate has assembled for an issue are all so tantalizing that it's painful, nay, impossible to choose just one. Which is why, instead, I'd like to share my thought process behind five projects I'd love to swatch in this issue.



First, Wencke Lucas's charming cardigan, [Keynote](#). The original sample is knit in CEY Classic Elite Yarns Verde Collection Woodland, a gently heathered, reasonably well-rounded yarn with a good degree of fuzz to it. It's really quite a lovely solution. But what if...? My mind turns to the smoother but still well-rounded yarns several hand-dyers are using lately, including Spirit Trail Fiberworks, that contain a dusting of silk. Not so much that the garment becomes heavy—there's a bit of patterning along the front panels—but enough to add a hint of shimmer and accent to the stitchwork?



Up next, Susanna IC's shawl, [Isen](#). Again, the yarn she chose, Halcyon Yarn 2/5 Gemstone Silk, is already a perfect match. The worsted-spun silk has luxurious drape and a modest sheen that helps the beaded accents really pop. With stockinette-based patterning atop a smooth sheet of reverse-stockinette, what if you bypassed the shimmer and clarity of each stitch in favor of a cozier, fuzzier effect? Not overpoweringly so, but, say, any wool-based yarn with at least 20 percent baby alpaca or angora. Why stop there? Budget willing, a 100-percent cashmere yarn could also fit the bill nicely.





Two projects are ideal candidates for the worsted-woolen swap I so enjoy. First, Sandi Rosner's Peloponnese cardigan with clever geometric slipstitch around the yoke, quite striking in its current form and made in Miss Babs Hand-dyed Yarns & Fibers Northumbria DK. But if your tension and confidence are still lacking, swapping an airy woolen-spun yarn would give more forgiveness to the fabric and produce a softer, gentler patterning.



Second, Rachel Coopey's colorwork hat and mittens set, Ceana. She's chosen some lovely colors of Sunshine Yarns Merino Sport that benefit from an appearance of faint variegation. Moving to a woolen-spun yarn would reduce the crispness and clarity of the motif. You could counter this with two much more dramatically contrasting colors, or you could augment the sense of nuance by pairing two colors that fall much closer on the spectrum. Either way, you'll get lovely results.





Finally, it's only fair that we turn the tables and propose a woolen-worsted swap. Here Kate Gilbert's [Quill](#) vest, a symphony of ribbing and undulating cables, offers the perfect forum for such an experiment. The sample has been knit in a gorgeous, earthy grey heathered yarn with loads of farm-housey fuzz: Briggs and Little Regal. Both the muted coloring and blurred surface texture help quiet a stitch pattern that could otherwise, in a well-rounded worsted-spun Merino or Merino blend, be quite bold and striking. In a solid, the cables would take on a sculptural quality; flickering semisolid, the whole vest would come to life. Give it a try and let me know what you think!

*Clara Parkes is the brilliant mind behind [knittersreview.com](http://knittersreview.com) and the author of several fantastic fiber books.*