



[CROCHET LIFE]

In a pickle!

✦ Declare your love of crochet with one of these stunning lino-cut prints from Woah There Pickle. Each print is hand carved and printed – so every one is unique – and available in red, yellow, or blue. They're created by Brighton-based printmaker Vicky Day, and we think they'd look just stunning brightening up your living room or crafty workspace.

If you're after something a bit smaller, check out Vicky's granny square greetings cards. These use the same design but printed digitally, and each pack contains one card in each colour.

Prints £20, Cards £4.50 for pack of three, www.woahtherepickle.co.uk

[NEW YARNS]

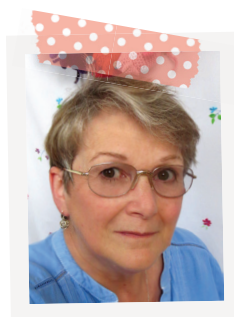
Fabulous aran-weight wool from MillaMia



✦ Soft, squishy and – all importantly – machine washable, we're big fans of MillaMia's Naturally Soft Merino yarn. Until now it's only been available in a sportweight (light DK), but the company has just launched a new Naturally Soft Aran range. This aran weight wool has the same handle and stitch definition as the original yarn, but with a slightly lighter twist to give loft without too much weight.

Naturally Soft Aran is available in 16 colours that include the vibrant bright shades MillaMia is known for, as well as sophisticated pastels and subtle natural tones. We can't wait to get hooking a cosy winter sweater or colourful accessories.

£5.50 per 50g ball, www.millamia.com



[CAREERS]

CROCHET ENTREPRENEURS

Penny Graham-Jones of Planet Penny shares the story of her online business

www.planetpenny.co.uk

Penny Graham-Jones has always enjoyed crochet and creativity, so when illness and misfortune hit she set up the Planet Penny blog, which has since turned into a thriving crochet business.

"I developed ME some time ago and had to leave paid employment," Penny explains. "When my health was more stable I rekindled a childhood ambition to go to Art School, which I loved. However just after graduating we had a house fire, the ME kicked back in and I was quite depressed.

"My husband suggested writing a blog as something I could do from home and gradually I found my voice, and writing about what I was making made me look for more creative things to do and so



"My designs have been inspired by the yarn I use. The rainbow of colours is so cheerful!"

Planet Penny grew that way. I found it very encouraging when people discovered me and left comments." But it didn't end there. "I spotted some beautiful colourful cotton yarn online and did a lot of detective work to find out what it was and where it came from. Having tracked down the suppliers in Europe I emailed them to find out where I could buy the yarn in the UK. The answer came back that there was no UK stockist, they would be happy to supply me with yarn but I would have to buy a wholesale quantity. I had wanted 14 balls of yarn; I ended up buying 14 kilos!

"It was a gamble but I reckoned that if I liked the colours so much other people would too and once I had made up a sample I was really impressed with the quality. I started out writing about it on the blog, and devised the Rainbow Mouse pattern which proved to be very popular so I opened my Etsy shop. Other patterns have followed and I now sell both the yarn and patterns all over the world."

Planet Penny's rainbow of colours have become instantly recognisable, especially when combined with Penny's vibrant designs. "My designs have been inspired by the yarn I use," says Penny. "The bright colours lend themselves to simple shapes and repeat patterns and the rainbow aspect of the colour range is so cheerful."

Penny lives in Norfolk with her husband Tim and her "small and very opinionated miniature dachshund, Higgins!" She's enjoying getting to spend her days dealing with yarn, crochet and creative customers. "I love it when people send pictures of the things they have created using the yarn. It's also great when I get to meet people in the flesh. I am part of Norfolk and Norwich Open Studios every year and it's lovely when people go out of their way to visit."

Go to www.planetpenny.co.uk for Penny's blog and free patterns, and www.planetpennyuk.etsy.com to buy patterns, cottons and fabric.