



Our creative teacher this month is

Wendy Bailye

Her specialty

Felt art

Where she teaches

Brisbane's Textile Art Festival, the Craft & Quilt Fairs in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide plus her home studio and more.

Find her at

www.heartandsoulaustralia.com

www.flickr.com/photos/xena-feltwoman

Mobile: 0409643220

Email: bailye@ozemail.com.au

No patterns, no rules and it's useful – just three of the many things that felting authority, Wendy Bailye, says make her artistic medium so ideal. As the guest artist of the Craft & Quilt Fairs this year in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide, visitors will see a special display of Wendy's creations. For those attending the Textile Art Festival (29 – 31 May at Brisbane Exhibition Centre, South Bank) there is the opportunity to study with Wendy. And for those who can't make it, just turn the page ... Wendy has produced a special project just for us.



This page: The beautiful and diverse work of Queensland's Wendy Bailye.



"I enjoy encouraging others to explore their individual creativity," says Wendy Bailye. "I am convinced that we are all incredibly artistic and creative, we just need to believe that we are - and have a teacher who believes in our ability!"

Wendy's passion for felting took flight around 16 years ago when a girlfriend showed her how to make a piece of felt at home. "We both had small children at the time so I made a hat for my son and a small flat piece and that was it. I was off."

Since then Wendy, already a qualified Home Economics and Special Needs teacher, has taken classes, read books and played and played with felt, along the way becoming an exhibiting artist and a respected teacher. Her fascination and love of felting has never waned and her position as an official artist of the Craft & Quilt Fairs simply allows her to spread the felting message further.

"Felt making is an ancient textile art with a long and fascinating history. It is also a fabulous contemporary art form that has many practical and modern applications," she explains. "Whilst it is quite simple to learn, mastering the medium can become an all consuming passion ... I am continuously refining my skills and learning from many other talented fibre artists who so generously share their wealth of knowledge with me ... Each year there are specialist felting courses in Australia and overseas which I try and attend. It is very much a craft that is passed on from person to person and this element of felt making is one of its joys."

Now working on her felt art full time, Wendy first began selling her work and passing on her techniques when her family had an organic food store and gift shop. "I just started running workshops from the store," says Wendy. Now, while they no longer have the shop, Wendy's felt work continues, stronger than ever. She has refined her methods more and more so that there is "the least mess possible" and so she finds herself doing demonstrations and teaching classes everywhere from exhibition centres and galleries to hen's nights and baby showers.



Above: Wendy Bailye says felting is so much fun, "sometimes it seems like too much fun". Left: 'Tree of Life'.

"When I start up a lot of people have never seen a piece of felt being made before," she says. "I am mostly using silk fabric and wool. We live in the tropics so I make a lightweight felt. It's a great way to use recycled materials too."

Living 30 minutes North West of Brisbane, Wendy has the luxury of living on 15 acres of beautiful land so she finds inspiration in abundance at her front door. She also does a lot of surfing on the internet where she says she is constantly amazed by the work people do.


From her home studio Wendy also runs classes where, amidst her family orchards, vegetable garden and chook sheds, students – never more than eight at a time – can be inspired.

"It's never boring," says Wendy. "It's so much fun, sometimes it seems like too much fun. Everything I do is a one-off and that is what I enjoy. Even my classes are the same. You never know what is going to happen. Everyone brings something different to class, from adults to seven-year-old boys. So many people come in saying that they're not creative. At the end of my class you'll know you're creative and there's no drawing required and no patterns. With felting you're basically painting and drawing with wool. It's almost impossible to make a mistake."

Wendy takes tufts of pure wool, hand dyed in a myriad of rainbow colours, and works them into pieces ranging from wearable arts and decorator items to large framed felt artworks. The work is embellished with hand dyed pure silk, mohair and exotic threads.

Her felted artwork has been purchased by private buyers in Australia and abroad and rests in private collections in Germany, Japan, Hong Kong, Sydney and Melbourne.

A great part of the appeal of felting for Wendy, besides the creative expression, is the form's social and collaborative essence. "For instance, she says, "once a week, I am collaborating with another textile artist – a quilter and fabric dyer – who comes to my studio. We explore each other's techniques and sometimes we jump up and down together because we've discovered something new or we're having such a good time."

"I am an active textile practitioner," says Wendy. "Always studying and honing my craft. I love to learn from others and also enjoy opportunities to mentor others in the textiles field." 

Useful links:

www.craftfair.com.au and

www.textileart.com.au or call

(02) 9452 7575.

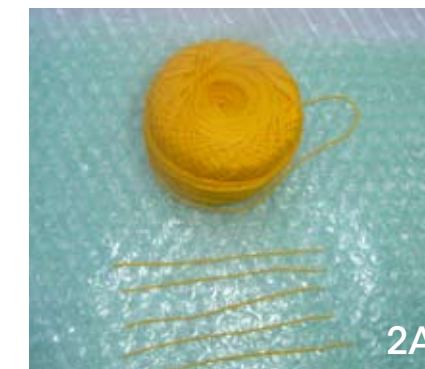
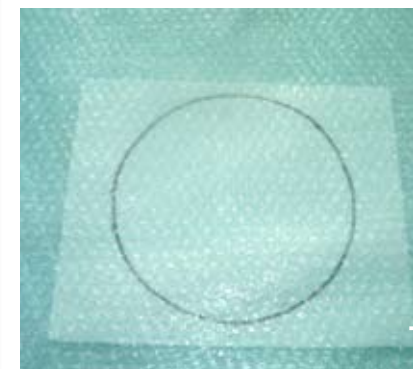
Make these beautiful, simple felt flower ties to adorn special gifts, hair and hats. They are easy to make & a delight to give. **Wendy Bailye**, contemporary felt maker, has created this original flower design for you.



materials

- fabric*
- two 50cm x 50cm pieces of bubble wrap (1cm bubbles)
- one 50cm x 50cm piece of nylon tulle netting
- cotton knitting yarn scraps for stamens (yellow or colour of choice)
- carded merino wool tops (roving) in colours of choice – 1.2m long roving for tie & approx 25g for flowers (colours of choice). This will be enough for at least 4 flowers!
- plastic container for water
- bar of soap
- old supermarket grocery bag
- old towel

*Finely cut up fabrics scraps (1cm bits or smaller) – silk georgette, cotton voile or cotton muslin. Silk fabric gives a lovely shine. You could cut up an old silk or voile shirt. I love to use recycled garments such as colourful old voile sarongs – who hasn't got a tragic too bright sarong decorated with fishes lying in the bottom drawer!! Recycle fabrics if you can. The fabric needs to be 100% natural and it should be able to be blown through i.e. you can feel your breath going through the fabric weave to the other side.



step 1 - preparation

Place the bubble wrap bubble side up on a flat surface. Place warm water in a container and swish your bar of soap in it till water is a little frothy. Remove soap.

step 2 - the flower

Draw a 20cm diameter circle on a piece of paper using a dark marker (use a plate as a guide). Place it under the bubble wrap, bubble side facing up. Felt flowers shrink by about 40% - 50% if correctly hardened. Your finished flower will be about 10cm in diameter. Cut 5 x 8cm long lengths of cotton yarn for stamens and put aside. Pull out 14 x 8cm lengths of wool top (roving). Pull on the last 1cm of the roving to get a nice layer- not too thick. Place two layers of petals one on top of the other. If it seems too thin (i.e. you

can see the bubble wrap through the petals) add another fine petal shaped wool layer on top. Twist each end of the petal (like waxing a moustache!!) Until you have a nice petal shape. Pull out both sides of each petal half way down so the petal is wider in the middle otherwise the petals will be too thin when felted. Place all the wool petals on the top of the bubble wrap using the circle radiating from the centre. The flower petals should overlap slightly at the centre point.

step 3 - decoration

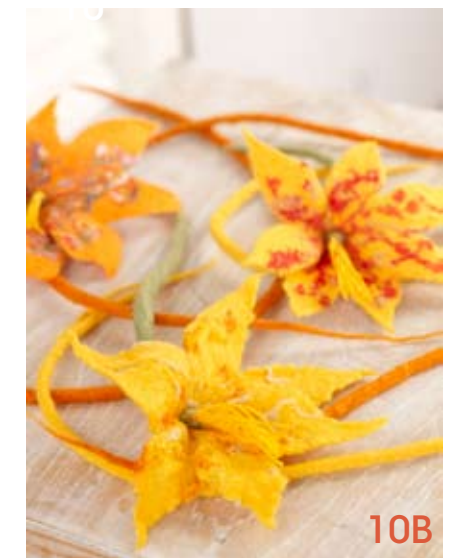
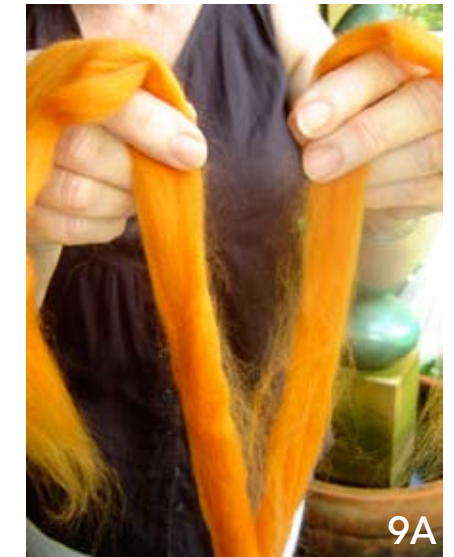
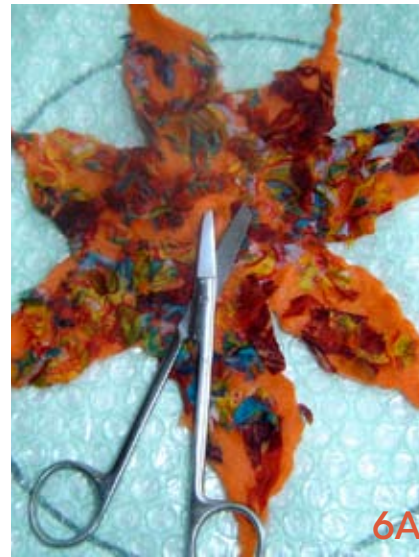
Cut your fabric scraps into tiny pieces and sprinkle on top of the wool petals. When you are happy with the design, cover the flower with the piece of netting.

step 4 - wetting

Dip your old grocery bag into the soapy water and apply the very wet soapy bag to the net covered flower once only. Pat gently until the wool is very flat and wet right through. If the wool roving is still puffy add more water using plastic bag. Don't rub! Remove excess water by covering the net covered flower with a dry old towel. Pat lightly on top of the towel with flat of hands once only. If you remove too much water it won't felt. Remove towel. Carefully remove netting.

step 5 - felting

Roll up the flat flower tightly in the bubble wrap. Put an old towel on table with rolled up bubble wrap on top. Roll back and forwards for 40 rolls. Unroll and carefully straighten up the flower stretching it back carefully into



a circular shape and pulling out the petal centres so they are not too thin. Smooth out creases. Roll the bubble wrap from each of the remaining three sides for 40 rolls (160 rolls altogether). The wool should now have adhered to the fabrics and have started to harden and shrink.

step 6 – attaching stamens & stem

Cut a 1cm slit in the centre of the flower. Pull out a long 10cm length of roving in a stem colour. Hold the wool roving in two hands and tear a long length about 1cm in diameter from the side of the roving. It should separate off easily. Lay this on the table top and find the half way mark. Lay the stamens across the wool roving at their halfway point and tie the wool roving in

a knot around the stamens. Pull knot tight. Dip the stamens and knot briefly in the soapy water. The stem section can stay dry until later. Pass the wool knot through the hole in the flower from the outside of the flower to the centre. Make sure the knot is sticking through the flower at least 1cm.

step 7 – fulling (shrinking & shaping)

Gather the petals carefully around the stamens and the knot. Carefully place the flower on the palm of one hand sideways. Rub the other hand backwards and forwards over the knotted section only for five minutes or until the flower petals and knot have stuck together at the base of the flower. Wet the stem section and roll it between your palms backwards

and forwards briskly until it is hard (at least 5 minutes). Now with the flower still in between your palms rub the flower petal section very vigorously until it starts to shrink. After 20 rubs open out the petals so they are not felting together and stretch and shape them a little. Pay special attention to the middle part of the petal and stretch it wider so the petals are not too skinny. Repeat the rubbing and shaping process at least four times until you are happy with the shape and the petals are hard and able to hold their shape. You can add a little extra soapy water along the way if the flower becomes dry. Don't use too much soap or the flower becomes a slippery unmanageable mess. If this happens just rinse in clear water and keep going!

step 8 – rinsing & drying

Rinse your flower until the water runs clear. Roll out the excess water in an old dry towel. Reshape and leave to dry in the shape you wish it to be and voila! A beautiful, original flower creation!

step 9 – the tie

Carefully pull out a long length of roving about 1cm wide and 1.2m long. If it breaks you can join it by laying the ends over each other and rolling them on the bubble wrap to rejoin the fibres. For a thicker tie make the roving 2cm wide. Remember it will shrink by up to 50%. Place the length of roving on the bubble wrap and begin rolling it gently backwards and forwards with the palms of your hands (no water). Do this the length of the roving, moving it sideways along the bubble wrap as you go. It will

firm up and form a skin. Then begin to sprinkle a little soapy water on the roving and keep rolling it gently. Do this until the whole length is firming up. This is a slow process. If you try to do it too quickly you will get creases in your tie. Continue until the wool is completely wet and the felt is starting to harden. This will take about half an hour of rolling! Stretch your tie as it hardens and then roll it between your palms until it is really hard.

step 10 – finishing

The next step is attaching the flower to the tie. You can attach this in many ways. Just stitch the flower with sturdy cotton to the tie wherever you would like. I use dental floss (clean of course!!) It makes a very sturdy waxed thread and can be sewn if the felt is

still wet. Stitch multiple flowers on your tie to make a hat band. Or make a little loop with the flower stem and it can be a sliding flower! Make a necklace or lariat... or you could attach two flowers – one on each end of the tie. The possibilities are endless. You can vary the size of the flower by varying the size of the circle you cut and adjusting the lengths of roving accordingly. You can also change the shape and number of petals for a creative flower experiment! I would hope that every flower you make is different and you can experience the joy of how each flower has a life and style of its very own.