

# Bag of the Month

## July: Saori rag-weaving for a shoulder bag

DINAH ROSE

*Saori weaving originated in Japan and is being practiced more and more in the United States (see Handwoven, January/February, page 25, and visit [www.saoriworcester.com](http://www.saoriworcester.com). A main principle of Saori is that weaving is a means to express individual creativity. I decided to weave in the Saori way, using rags as weft for this bag.*

**T**he beauty of Saori weaving is that you don't have to plan ahead very much! You simply weave, making choices and changes as you respond to the threads in front of you. For this bag, I just picked up fabric strips at random, creating a pattern using a clasped-weft technique.

### Using a clasped weft

With this technique, two contrasting wefts create a pattern by entering the shed from opposite sides, passing around each other ("clasping"), and exiting the same shed from the side they entered. The clasping point for each pick can be manipulated easily by hand.

If you are using very thick and short wefts like these rags, the wefts can enter one shed, but clasp and exit in the next shed. To do this: Take both fabric strips into the shed (no need for a shuttle), determine the clasping point, bring them out of the shed between two warp threads at this point, wrap them around each other, change the shed, and return them to their starting point. This can also be done using three contrasting wefts. The idea is just to play and have fun using different wefts and trying different things to see what you like.




*Dinah Rose of Woodstock, Georgia, weaves fabric for garments and bags, often using rags as weft. Visit her at [www.DinahRose.com](http://www.DinahRose.com).*

**Step 1** Wind a warp of 150 ends 1¾ yd long. Use your preferred warping method to thread the loom for plain weave.

**Step 2** Weave a heading with scrap yarn. Cut rag strips into ½" strips (⅜" strips for heavy fabric) and wind on a ski or stick shuttle (use without a shuttle where clasping is desired). Begin and end with 1½" in doubled 5/2 cotton for hems. Weave 22" with rags using a clasped weft where desired.

**Step 3** Cut lining the same size as bag fabric. (Use the rest for pockets, if desired.) Turn under hems of bag and lining; press. Turn and press pocket edges; turn top pocket edges twice and stitch. Stitch pockets on right side of lining fabric in desired positions.

I like to make one pocket big enough to stitch down the center, creating two smaller pockets.

**Step 4** Fold bag fabric in half right sides together; stitch side seams and stitch diagonally across bottom corners. Turn and press. Repeat with lining. Place lining in bag, wrong sides together. Cut a piece of braided upholstery trim for handles and a small piece for a button loop. Sandwich the handles between the lining and bag fabric at bag sides, the loop at the center of one side. Stitch through all layers around the top of the bag. Stitch a second time next to the first stitching. Sew button on opposite side from closure loop. 

### PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

#### Weave structure for totes

Plain weave.

#### Equipment

2-shaft or 4-shaft loom, 15" weaving width; 10-dent reed; 1 or 2 stick or ski shuttles; sewing machine.

#### Yarns

Warp: 5/2 pearl cotton (2,100 yd/lb), black, 263 yd.  
Weft: about 50 yd of ½" fabric strips from two or more coordinating fabrics.

#### Notions and other materials

½ yd lining fabric, matching sewing thread, 1¾ yd braided upholstery trim, button.

#### Yarn and materials sources

5/2 cotton is available from weaving shops, fabric and webbing from fabric stores.

#### Warp order and length

150 ends 1¾ yd long (allows 4" for take-up and 35" for loom waste).

#### Warp and weft spacing

Warp: 10 epi (1/ dent in a 10-dent reed). Width in the reed: 15".  
Weft: 5 ppi. Woven length (measured under tension on the loom): 25".

#### Finished dimensions

After washing, amounts produce fabric 14" × 24" for a bag 13 × 11½".

