

NALA Member Social Oct 24, 2024, 4-5 PM EST

Regional Mill Grant Research / Growing Protocols in Northeast New England - Andrea Myklebust and Laura Sullivan

Andrea and Laura will share the story of a bast-fibre feasibility study funded by a Fibershed microgrant during 2023/24. The project, conducted by a working group of the Northern New England Fibershed affiliate, explores current flax and hemp production in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont and the potential demand for a small-scale primary scutching facility and bast fiber spinning infrastructure.



Andrea is a shepherd and weaver. She has a background in the fine arts, and worked as a sculptor for twenty years, creating site-based public art installations in towns and cities across the US with her husband, Stanton Sears. She became a shepherd in 2011 and a flax farmer in 2012. She began growing fiber hemp in 2023 and her farm, Mountain Heart, is presently a satellite site for some of UVM's Fiber Hemp research and her own work under a USDA SARE Grant awarded in 2024. Her work is focused on understanding how traditional hand textile-making practices can inform new ways of making cloth through a translation of historic processes and materials to the present day and beyond. She is interested in work which revitalizes rural communities, heals the environment, and rebuilds local economies. She has taught spinning, weaving, and flax-to-linen topics at the John C Campbell Folk School, North House Folk School, and the Marshfield School of Weaving, among others. She is part of the Northern New England Fibershed's Bast Fiber Committee, and a consultant for Green Mountain Linen. She lives with her family in Danby, Vermont.



Laura is an Artist and farmer whose work hinges on the belief that clothing is agriculture. She has worked with UVM Extension since 2021 growing hemp for fiber, and is also earning an MFA in Visual Art through Vermont College of Fine Art focused in Hemp fiber. As a member of the Northern New England Fibershed advisory board, she is working to advocate for bast fiber farmers and processing facilities in the Northeast. Before moving to Vermont, she received a BA from Colorado College in fine art, worked on farms throughout Portugal, and interned for a felt artist in the Netherlands. She has over twenty years experience as a textile artist, over thirteen years experience in farming, and over nine years experience working with hemp fiber. In 2020, she performed R&D for a startup company utilizing locally grown Milkweed floss for clothing insulation. Her passion lives at the intersection between art and agriculture and her long-term goals include reviving the Fibershed of the Northeast to include working landscapes of hemp and flax fiber.