

# KNITTING FOR KIDS

EXPERT GUIDE  
BY BARB BROWN



EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEW  
WITH DESIGNER  
SECRETS

*Plus!*  
EXTRA  
PATTERN

*The*  
**Knitter**

FREE with Issue 61 of The Knitter





Barb Brown  
Pieter

## SIZE

TO FIT AGE	1½-3	3½-5	5½-7	yrs
TO FIT CHEST	49-55	56-61	62-67	cm
	19-22	22½-24	24½-26	in
ACTUAL CHEST	61½	66½	71½	cm
	24¼	26	28	in
ACTUAL LENGTH	34	40	42	cm
	13¼	15¾	16½	in
SLEEVE SEAM	23	27	28	cm
	10	12	13½	in

## TENSION

24 sts and 32 rows to 10cm over st st on 3.75mm needles

## YARN

**Rico Design** Essentials Merino DK (DK weight; 100% merino; 120m/131yds per 50g ball)

**A** Mid Grey (24); 2 x 50g balls

**B** Red (05); 2 x 50g balls

**C** Cream (60); 1 x 50g ball

**D** Light Grey (98) 2 x 50g balls

**E** Yellow (65) 2 x 50g balls

## NEEDLES & ACCESSORIES

1 pair 3.25mm (UK 10/US 3) knitting needles

1 pair 3.75mm (UK 9/US 5) knitting needles,

plus a spare needle for casting off

Stitch holders

Stitch markers

2 x 20mm (¾in) buttons

“THE COLOUR-BLOCK design of this hooded sweater is an example of garments I knitted for my own boys,” says Barb Brown. “I created blocks of colour and random stripes to use up the leftovers from solid colour sweaters. Here, the paintings of Piet Mondrian inspired me to use a dark neutral colour to separate colours that clashed.”

## STITCH PATTERNS

Rib over an even number of sts:

**(Every row):** (K1, P1) to end.

Rib over an odd number of sts:

**(RS):** (K1, P1) to last st, K1.

**(WS):** (P1, K1) to last st, P1.

## BACK

\*\*With 3.25mm needles and yarn A, using the long-tail method, cast on 68 (72:78) sts. Starting with a WS row, work rib for 19 (23:23) rows.

**Next row (RS):** Work rib and at the same time inc 6 (8:8) sts evenly across row. 74 (80:86) sts.

Change to 3.75mm needles.

**Next row (WS):** Purl.

Break yarn A and commence colour blocks using the intarsia method as follows:

**Note:** Bring new colour over the top of old colour when changing.

**Row 1 (RS):** Join yarn B and K37 (40:43), join yarn C and knit to end.

**Row 2 (WS):** With yarn C, P37 (40:43), with yarn B, purl to end.

Rep these 2 rows a total of 24 (28:30) times.

**Next row (RS):** Cast off 3 (4:6) sts, K to 3 (4:6) sts from end and cast off rem sts.

Break yarns B and C. 68 (72:74) sts.

**Next row (WS):** Join A and purl to end.\*\*

Commence second set of colour blocks as follows:

**Next row:** Join yarn D and K34 (36:37), join E and knit to end.

**Next row:** With yarn E, P34 (36:37), with yarn D, purl to end.

Rep these 2 rows a total of 20 (24:26) times ending with a WS row. Break yarns D and E.

**Next row (RS):** Join yarn A and knit to end. Place all sts on hold. You will have the following number of sts; 21 (20:20) for each shoulder and 26 (32:34) for the neck.

## FRONT

Work as for Back from \*\* to \*\*.

Now work Front in two separate halves at the same time (or separately if preferred) as follows:

**Next row (RS):** Join yarn D, K30 (32:33), pm, K4 (4:4), cast on 4 sts. Join yarn E, cast on 4 sts, K4 (4:4), pm, knit to end.

Work the 8 sts inside the markers in garter st (K every row) and work rem sts in st st as set for 11 more rows and AT THE SAME TIME work buttonhole on LH placket on the 7th row as follows: slm, K4, yo, K2tog, K2.

## NECK SHAPING

Place the 13 (16:17) neck edge sts from each side on hold. Working both sides, dec 1 st in from neck edge every 2nd RS row 4 times. 4 sts dec'd each side.

Cont in st st to 40 (48:52) rows from

armhole cast-off. Break yarns D and E.

**Next row (RS):** Join yarn A and K 1 row on each shoulder.

Place rem 21 (20:20) sts for each shoulder on hold.

## SHOULDERS

Place 21 (20:20) shoulder sts from Front and Back on separate needles with RS together and using the spare needle and A, work a three-needle cast-off. Rep for second shoulder.

## SLEEVE

With RS facing, using 3.75mm needles and A, pick up and K60 (72:78) sts around armhole opening.

**Next row (WS):** Purl.

**Note:** Change to yarn B for RH sleeve and work LH sleeve with yarn E.

Cont in st st for 60 (76:78) rows.

**Next row:** (K1, K2tog) to end. 40 (48:52) sts.

**Next row:** Change to A, purl across and at the same time evenly dec 6 sts. 34 (42:46) sts.

Change to 3.25mm needles and work 19 rows in rib.

Cast off loosely in rib.

Rep for second sleeve using the other colour.

## NECK AND HOOD

With 3.25mm needles, yarn A and RS facing, starting at the left front, K13 (16:17) neck edge sts from holder and at the same time place a marker after 8 sts, pick up and K23 (31:35) sts along left front, K24 (30:32) back neck, K2tog, pick up and K23 (31:35) sts along right front edge, K13 (16:17) neck



## BLOCKING DIAGRAM



Yarn stockists: [www.rico-design.co.uk](http://www.rico-design.co.uk)

edge sts from holder and at the same time place a marker after 8 sts. 97 (125:137) sts. Keeping first and last 8 sts in garter st, work rib for 9 rows and at the same time, work a buttonhole on 5th row.

Change to 3.75mm needles.

With RS facing, cont working garter borders in yarn A and join yarn D for the hood.

Work 6 rows straight.

**Next row (RS):** Work 47 (61:67) sts M1L, (K1, pm) twice, K1, M1R, K to end. 2 sts inc'd.

\*\*\* Work 5 rows straight.

**Next row (RS):** K to 1 st before marker, M1L, (K1, slm) twice, K1, M1R, K to end. \*\*\* Rep from \*\*\* to \*\*\* a further 8 (9:10) times. 115 (145:159) sts.

Work 15 (19:23) rows straight.

**Next row (RS):** K to 3 sts before marker, K2tog, (K1, slm) twice, K1, SSK, K to end. 2 sts dec'd.

**Next row (WS):** Work in patt as set.

Rep prev 2 rows once more then dec row only a further 3 times. Break yarn D. 105 (135:149) sts.

**Next row (WS):** With yarn A, purl across and at the same time P2tog at centre of the row. 104 (134:148) sts.

Place half of the sts on one needle, and half on another. Holding RS together work a three-needle cast-off.

## FINISHING

Weave in ends and block to measurements, following any yarn care instructions on the ballband. Join seams and attach buttons. ☺





# KNITTING FOR KIDS

Barb Brown discusses how to create comfortable, wearable and long-lasting knits that little ones will love to wear



Kids like hoods in cold weather – and they won't get lost like a hat

**WHEN** I first started knitting sweaters for my kids, I was dismayed when the boys so quickly grew out of them or, even worse, refused to wear the sweater at all. Over the years, I found some techniques that helped solve both problems. I am sharing these with you in hopes that your child's sweater will fit longer than a month, and have a chance to wear out from constant use!

## COLOUR

Spread out any yarn in your stash that has enough yardage to make the sweater, and let them pick the colour. If they want two colours, use them – it could turn out to be a happy surprise. My son once chose a muddy brown and a bright blue – horrible. But when it was knitted up, it was a beautiful sweater that everyone admired!

Light-coloured ribbing can look very grubby after just a short time. If you're knitting a light sweater, consider casting on the ribbing in a dark colour. It adds a bit of interest to a plain sweater, picks up one of the colours in a patterned sweater, and keeps the cuffs looking clean for longer.

Children are tough on their clothes, so consider working the ribbing with the yarn held double. This trick, part of the traditional construction of a hard-wearing fisherman's sweater, will help to stop edges from fraying and adds extra warmth.

## YARN CHOICE

I prefer wool for children's sweaters. You may have a very distinct memory of itchy jumpers, or perhaps the smell of wet wool overwhelming your school classroom after a rainy lunchtime spent playing outside. But this wouldn't necessarily be the case with a woollen jumper now.

There are many breed-specific wools on the market that are very soft yet tightly spun (as is the Rico Essentials DK used in the 'Pieter' pattern on the preceding



pages). Merino and Bluefaced Leicester are two readily available breeds.

More gently spun yarns, for example Debbie Bliss's Baby Cashmerino (a blend of wool, cashmere and acrylic) or Sublime Baby Cashmere Merino Silk DK, are super-soft and great for baby clothes.

Consider choosing superwash wool, particularly if you aren't making the piece for your own child. It's chemically treated to make it colourfast and stop it from felting when washed. Few parents will relish the prospect of handwashing their children's knits – with superwash wool, you should be able to put it in the washing machine. King Cole Merino Blend comes in 4ply, DK, aran and chunky weights and has a vibrant colour range, or try Peter Pan Merino Baby DK for gorgeous pastels.

Do check the label of superwash yarn, though – superwash may mean machine washing at 30C rather than the expected 40C. Washing too hot could still felt the garment, so be kind to the parents of the intended recipient and write the washing instructions for the yarn into a little card which can stay in the sweater drawer. You could even get special labels made with the washing information if you're feeling generous (try [www.jjcash.co.uk](http://www.jjcash.co.uk)).

Sock yarn is popular for children's garments, particularly for baby cardigans. It's soft, strong, usually superwash, and shouldn't be itchy. If you want to use this, bear in mind that it will probably have some nylon content, and some children are allergic to nylon or find it irritating to wear. If in doubt, use a pure wool sock yarn rather than a wool/nylon blend.



Choose a pure wool for warmth and durability

But why wool anyway? First, it's warm, and stays warm even when wet. Wool can absorb up to 30% of its weight in water without feeling wet. It is naturally water-repellent, which also means it doesn't get dirty as quickly as other fibres – it resists absorbing dirt and grease. And, very importantly, it is naturally fire retardant.

It may seem alarmist to think about your little one's clothing catching fire, but it is still a potential danger. Cellulose fibres, such as cotton and linen, will ignite and flare up very quickly, and burn up completely in seconds. Many synthetics will light quickly with a flare, then begin melting. Wool, on the other hand, is very difficult to ignite, and will extinguish when the flame is taken away.

If you want to check the flammability of the yarn you are using, you can perform a burn test. This should be done outdoors, with a bucket of water handy. Hold a long length of yarn in a pair of tongs, and light it while holding it over the bucket so it can be quickly extinguished.

Finally, make sure the child likes the yarn! I used to knit a little sleeping bag from my intended yarn for one of their small teddies. If the teddy was never in the bag, then I didn't use the yarn again. Very young children won't be able to tell you if they don't like the feel of a certain fabric, so this gets around that problem.

## SWEATER STYLE

If you are knitting for cold weather, consider going with a finer yarn than you might usually choose. Then, knit a matching gilet or vest using double strands of the yarn. Make the armhole depth an inch longer than the sweater. Kids don't like clothing that restricts their arm movement, which chunky wool often does. A gilet keeps the body core warm, and usually will be kept on when a heavier sweater will be tossed on someone's lawn.

Raglan or drop-shoulder sweaters tend to fit a child longer and accommodate the strange growth patterns every child goes through at some point. A pullover is better than a cardigan as kids rarely pause long enough to do up buttons or zippers. Be sure to make the neck roomy enough to go over the head. A two- or three-button placket worked in the front is my favourite solution.

If the sweater is for very cold weather, consider adding a hood rather than knitting a matching hat. A hood can't get lost, and most kids will actually pull it up if their ears are cold.



Let your child pick out the colours – you might just like them!

## ADDING ARMHOLE DEPTH

Check the depth of the armhole of your pattern. Generous room will allow the garment to fit for longer. To add depth to an armhole you can go two ways – shorten the body but keep the garment length the same, or add overall length to the garment, placing the extra at the armhole.

Usually when making a garment from the bottom up you'll be instructed to 'work to XXcm and then begin armhole shaping'. To keep body length the same, shorten this length and add the difference to the depth worked over the armhole.

Alternatively, stick to the original length given before working the armhole and then add the extra length you want into the armhole. This will increase the total length of the garment.

Either way you choose to increase armhole depth, you will need to alter the sleeve head to fit the deeper armhole. For a drop sleeve, the sleeve head will be the width of twice the armhole depth, so you will need to increase to a larger number of stitches to fit the new depth. So, if you have an original sleeve width of 30cm, and an original armhole of 15cm, you will need to add 2cm to the sleeve width to every 1cm increase in armhole depth.

For example, if working at a tension of 20 sts to 10cm, you will need 60 sts at the top of the sleeve in the original version, and an extra 4 sts across the top of the sleeve for every 1cm added to the armhole depth.

For a set-in sleeve, the sleeve cap will typically be two-thirds of the new armhole depth. First, work out the new depth of the armhole and calculate the



# Masterclass

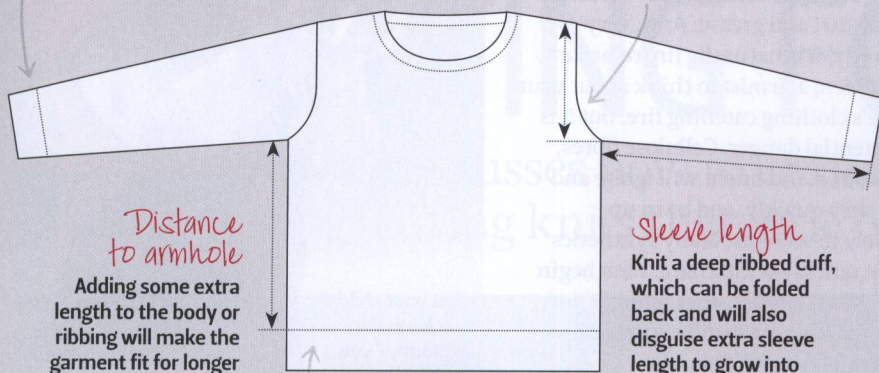
## MAKING SWEATERS LAST FOR LONGER!

### Ribbed cuff

Help the cuffs stand up to the inevitable wear-and-tear by knitting the ribbing with the yarn held doubled

### Armhole depth

Extra armhole depth will create a comfier fit and allow plenty of room for movement!



### Distance to armhole

Adding some extra length to the body or ribbing will make the garment fit for longer

### Sleeve length

Knit a deep ribbed cuff, which can be folded back and will also disguise extra sleeve length to grow into

### Body ribbing

Consider using a dark colour for the ribbing, even on a light-coloured sweater, to prevent it looking grubby too quickly



'Ernest' is knitted with gussets to provide extra armhole depth

number of extra rows you'll need to knit over the sleevehead.

You will need to add two-thirds of this number of rows to the sleeve cap shaping – the easiest way to do it is to space these out over the decreases, remembering to concentrate the extra space AFTER the section where the decreases on the armhole and sleevehead match, which falls right after the initial cast-offs.

A raglan sleeve is structured differently, but the requirement to spread the extra depth of the new armhole across the raglan sleeve shaping remains. This is perhaps the trickiest sleeve shape to add length to, because in a classically designed, pieced raglan, all four raglan pieces will have different lengths at different points.

In this case, it's probably easiest to knit to the armhole and then follow the instructions for a larger size, knitting the sleeves for a larger size as well, so that your stitch counts are all proportionate. As long as you only go one size up the difference shouldn't be too noticeable.

One last option is to knit a gusset for the armhole. This technique, which is suitable for garments made in the round, can be seen in Caroline Pearce's 'Ernest' gansey in *The Knitter* issue 32. Armhole gussets are created by increasing either side of a 'seam stitch' towards the armhole, to give a triangular gusset of fabric. These gusset stitches are then put on hold while the body

is worked. Finally, the shoulders are joined and the sleeves then picked up around the armhole, including these gusset stitches. The gusset is then 'decreased out' along the length of the sleeve as you work down.

For an excellent overview of ganseys and their construction, including detailed instructions on armhole gussets, try Beth Brown-Reinsel's book *Knitting Ganseys* (White River Press) or Alice Starmore's *Fisherman's Sweaters* (Collins & Brown).

## SLEEVES

Knit the sleeves top down. This makes it easier to pick out the cast-off and add a couple of inches if needed later. To do this, join the shoulder and side seams then, with right side facing, pick up evenly all around the armhole and join to work in the round.

You can pick up the sleeves and then work them back and forth on straight needles, but you should get a more even stocking stitch fabric if you work on circulars in knit stitch only.

## LENGTH

Usually, a sweater is too small for a child because it's too short in the body or the sleeves. To knit longer sleeves without having the cuffs dangling past the fingers, try this. Find the difference in the number of stitches between the ribbing and the top of the sleeve. Increase this whole amount immediately after the ribbing, and then

knit straight till the sleeve is about 1 or 2 inches too long. The fabric will 'blouse' over the ribbing, making the extra length you've just added less obvious.

For more length in the body, just make it longer. Add some of the extra rows into the ribbing, and again the fabric will 'blouse' as it does in the sleeves.

## FIT

Be sure to check the difference between the 'blocked' chest and the 'actual' chest measurements and go with a little larger difference. Some patterns have a small difference between the two. The heavier the yarn used, the greater the difference should be. This will make the sweater comfier to wear, and also allow that all important room to grow! ☺

For those who love to knit, KnitPro needles are the top choice. These beautiful and high-quality needles includes the Symfonie Wood, Spectra Acrylic and Nova Metal ranges. With straights, DPNs, circulars and interchangeable circulars available in every range, it's easy to find the perfect needle for any project.

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FOR THOSE WHO LOVE TO KNIT



# Meet Barb Brown

We chatted to designer Barb about the joys of knitting for her children and grandchildren, and the wisdom of her Ukrainian grandma



## KNITWEAR DESIGNER

Barb Brown, from Alberta in Canada, has many years of experience of knitting for her children and grandchildren. We talked to her about her love of

children's knits, and how the lessons she learned from her Ukrainian grandmother still inspire her design work today.

**When did you first learn to knit, and who taught you?**

"I began learning to knit when I was around three years old. I haven't conquered it yet I guess, since the last new thing I learned was about a week ago. That's the thing that keeps me so interested in the craft – you wouldn't think there could be so much variation in two sticks, a string and two stitches, but there is.

"My Mom taught me how to knit (and then all the other knitters I've met along the way). She was an amazing teacher. I remember when I was 10, asking her if she thought I could do cables. She stared at me like I was crazy, and said 'Why not?' So I went ahead and did them."

**What was the first baby or child garment you ever made?**

"The first thing was a pair of booties at about nine stitches to the inch. I wasn't in school yet, and my favourite cousin was having a baby. I was so excited and wanted to make something for it. My Mom suggested booties, and it was amazing how quickly they went. It wasn't until I was much older that I realized the 'knitting fairy' had done quite a bit on them when I was sleeping. I have never been so proud of anything I've knit since as I was of those wee booties!

"I have one of those families with cousins around every corner, so there was always a baby shower to knit for! It wasn't until I had children of my own, though, that I started

designing my own versions. I discovered Elizabeth Zimmermann about the time my first son came along, and her advice freed me up from slavishly following patterns.

"We lived in a wet climate and dressing the boys in wool made the most sense. They had sweaters from 3-ply up to chunky, all designed for them – and frequently knitted up with left-overs from other projects. It was that experience that taught me how to get the sweaters to fit for longer than a couple of months. And how to knit something they would wear."

**When did you start designing your own knitwear patterns?**

"The first sweater I ever designed from start to finish was an Aran sweater. This was around 40 years ago! I didn't do a lot of it though until I became a Mom, and that's about 33 years now.

"The first design I ever sold was my 'Blue Willow Socks' (the matching mittens were the second). Bonny Franz, who had an online newsletter called *Stranded*, bought them. She was so helpful! She took me by the hand and led me down the dark and rocky path of being a designer."

**Your work has appeared many times in *The Knitter*, but this is the first children's design that we've featured. What do you enjoy most about creating knits for kids?**

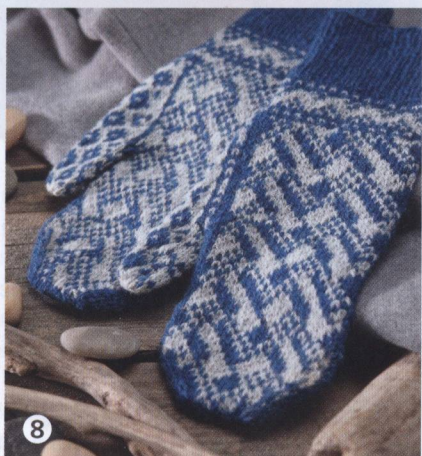
"The colours. I love to work with colour, and kids have no preconceived notions of what they should and should not like. I try to see through a child's eyes, and then match that to the colour. And when a child likes it, then it is just so satisfying!

"People ask me what I mean by 'child's eye'. Picture a kid with a marigold they've picked, and they are studying it all over and staring at it. Now go get some rusty orange and some dark green and maybe a few yards of yellow and knit them a hat. You'll probably have trouble getting them to take that hat off for bed."



- ① 'Pysanka' from *The Knitter* 30 was inspired by Barb's Ukrainian heritage
- ② Barb made this little hoody for her sons
- ③ 'Varezki Bag' from *The Knitter* 54
- ④ Barb's playful, wearable designs aim to bring a smile to children's faces





## “When it comes to colour, I am greatly influenced by my Ukrainian family”

**Do you have a favourite style of knitting?**

“Stranded colourwork is my passion. I knit it using both hands, and it just seems like it flows from my fingers. And the result is like painting a picture. I can’t draw to save my soul, but I can do this! And it satisfies the artist in me. I have a couple of sweaters for myself in my mental queue, one by Elizabeth Lovick, and the other my own design (which for now is just in my head).”

**Where do you find inspiration for your knitting designs?**

“I find inspiration everywhere. The last stranded pattern I did for myself is a good example. I saw skeins of naturally-dyed yarn hanging in a shop, and I could see the sweater... all I had to do was go home and knit it. Once I saw skeins of yarn done in a colour wheel, and that night I dreamed of a field of flowers, orange ones on dark green stems. I knit a ruffled scarf in those colours. A photo by Franklin Habit of the wrought iron railings in a yard in Key West gave me a pair of mittens. Old embroidery patterns, traditional designs, paintings, old weaving setts... they all inspire me. I have a file on my computer called ‘shapes and colours’. If a photo catches my eye, I save it there. If inspiration fails, I scroll through that file, and the brain starts buzzing.

“When it comes to colour, I am greatly influenced by my childhood. I grew up surrounded by Ukrainian relatives in Manitoba. Many were the old ladies who had come from the ‘old country’ as

children. They all made traditional painted Ukrainian Easter Eggs (called *pysanky*). My Baba (Granny) taught me how to make these and taught me the colour rules:

You can’t have too much red.

Don’t put yellow next to white, it won’t show up.

A little black never hurts.

Blue and white sells.

“Colour theory makes my brain freeze! Hue, complementary colours, depth of shade... I understand it when it’s explained, but five minutes later it’s gone. The *pysanky* theory works for me.”

**Your book, *Knitting Knee-Highs*, is a treasure-trove of beautiful designs. Do you have any plans to publish another book?**

“Yes, I am currently working on a book. The publishing industry is in a state of flux right now, what with all the e-books and other digital formats available. I am looking into self-publishing, so I need to learn about the options out there.”

**What do you have on your needles today?**

“I put down a lopi weight sweater for my four-year-old granddaughter to do this interview. She asked me to knit her a sweater with ‘baby deer and trees’. There is an old Mary Maxim pattern that I am adapting for this. I never knit just one thing though, I find it rests my hands to work on several weights of yarn at a time. There are also two pairs of fingerless gloves on my needles, a vest in fingering weight, a hat in painted fingering, and a revamp of a lace garment I designed a few years ago.”

**Are there any techniques you’d like to explore in 2013?**

“I want to swatch up some of the Estonian stitches such as the nupp, and some texture stitches to see how they look in fingering yarn. I’d like to explore traditional stitches from other cultures too. I enjoy exploring how people around the world have used knitting to express their cultures. The colour, the designs... you learn so much about people; there are many differences, and then surprising similarities. Elizabeth Lovick is doing a book on Orkney knitting, and I am looking forward to that. I also want to explore shawl shapes, mid-Eastern knitting... I think I will need to live to be 317 years old to get done all I’d like to do.”

To find more of Barb’s designs visit [www.ravelry.com/designers/barb-brown](http://www.ravelry.com/designers/barb-brown)

⑤ ‘Cushington Square’ from the book *Sock Yarn Studio* (Lark Crafts, 2012) ⑥ ‘Borealis’ from *The Knitter 45* mixes black with colour ⑦ Two of Barb’s baby vests for her own family ⑧ ‘Karelia’ from *The Knitter 51* ⑨ Barb loves to knit lace, too: this is her ‘Feathers’ wrap