There are many different types of fiber to tantalize the fingertips as you work them. A brief description of some of these fibers is listed below:

ALPACA

1 Alpaca is one of three species of llama and a relative of the camel. These animals are native to South America, where they were domesticated in the upper reaches of the Andes mountains for their long, silky-soft hair. Today, alpaca is usually found in natural colors of off white, gray, fawn, and reddish, light and dark browns, and 99% of the world’s alpaca population is found in Bolivia, Chile and Peru. There are two varieties of alpaca: “suri” and “huacaya.” Suri alpacas are delicate animals with long locks of hair that hang almost to the ground. Their hair is thinner and has a higher oil content than the huacayas, which are strong animals with shorter, spongier hair. Llamas evolved in South America almost 2 million years ago, and archaeozoological evidence states that both llamas and alpacas were domesticated approximately 6,000-7,000 years ago in the high Andes mountains. By 3,800 years ago their coats had developed into two distinct fiber types as they trickled down the mountains into Chile, and reached coastal cities between 400 and 100 BCE. The Incas used Alpacas from everything as a source for fiber to central parts of their religious ceremonies. The invading Spanish

15 Conquistadors failed to utilize alpacas for their fiber, preferring the merino wool of their homeland, so alpaca fiber was virtually unknown outside of South America until the mid 1800s. Sir Titus Salt of London, England re-discovered alpaca, noting that it was stronger than wool despite the fineness of the staple tested. The alpaca textiles produced by his mills began making their mark across Europe and remained a common fabric in the apparel industry, but declined in popularity during WWII. Today, it is popular in the US with hand spinners and weavers, but its main markets are in Japan and Western Europe.