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# camira

style with substance

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Bast Fibre Blends

From field to fabric. We're creating a new generation of natural fibre fabrics. Made from pure new wool blended with harvested nettles, hemp, flax and jute.

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## The Natural Choice

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Our vision is to be the natural choice for fabric solutions worldwide – quite literally. So we always look to nature to provide the best answers.

Nature teaches us so much in terms of rapid renewability, biodegradability, perfect fit for purpose and of course beauty.

Camira are pioneering designers and manufacturers of so-called bast fibre fabrics made from innovative blends of pure new wool combined with naturally occurring textile fibres derived from harvested nettles, hemp, flax and jute. Bast fibres are found in the outer part of the stem of the plant, just inside the bark, making them strong, elastic and flexible, so ideal characteristics for spinning into yarn and weaving into fabric.

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## A sting in the tale

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It all started with Sting: an acronym for a four year project “Sustainable Technology in Nettle Growing” and the name of our award winning upholstery fabric.

Back in 2005, we teamed up with academic partner De Montfort University in Leicester, UK, and led the way in developing an industry first fabric made from wool and nettle fibre obtained from the common stinging nettle. The project encompassed research into nettle cultivation on UK farmland; harvesting methods and fibre extraction; blending, spinning, weaving and dyeing; technical performance evaluation; lifecycle assessment. Sting has now matured into the Nettle Collection, a family of three textile patterns, and the entire learning process informed the development of a totally new category of natural bast fibre fabrics.

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### Nettle facts and trivia:

- Nettles grow rapidly from springtime onwards, up to a height of 2.5 metres
- They grow easily on land which is often unsuitable for arable crops
- They don't require pesticides or herbicides
- The fibre is extracted mechanically through a process known as decortication
- The woody remnant after fibre extraction is used as animal bedding
- Nettle cultivation encourages bio-diversity, providing a natural habitat for birds and insects
- Nettles are known for their medicinal and healing properties, are used in soaps and shampoo, or as flavourings in wine, tea, soup and beer



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## Intoxicating fabrics made from hemp

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No you're not seeing things. We really do make fabrics from the raw material which is more associated with recreational drugs and medicines.

From nettles, we quickly progressed to making fabrics from wool and hemp which is grown as an agricultural crop under licence from the UK government Home Office on Huit Farm in Leicestershire. Hemp is sown from seed - rather than planting nettle cuttings - and benefits from an even faster sowing to harvest cycle. After harvesting, the long stems are left in bundles in the fields, while their leaves decompose and act as fertiliser for the following year. Dew retting starts the process of fibre separation, which is completed by mechanical decortication. Blended with wool in a 60% wool 40% hemp mix, the end fabrics come in a dizzy array of intoxicating colours and patterns.

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### Hemp facts and trivia:

- The hemp we grow is the Cannabis sativa strain containing only minute amounts of the psychoactive substance THC
- It's one of the fastest biomasses known, reaching over three metres in just 120 days
- We plant 45kg of seed for every hectare, generating 6 tonnes of hemp straw, which in turn yields 1 tonne of textile fibre
- In a 60% wool, 40% hemp blend, 1 tonne of fibre is enough to make 5,400 metres of fabric
- Hemp's myriad uses include fuel, plastics, construction, cosmetics, medicines, paper and fabric
- Hemp fibres are soft, long and so strong they were used in sails, ropes and sailors' uniforms during the time of the British Empire







A symbol of purity, the magic of flax has been woven into human history as one of the oldest cultivated plants grown for both its textile fibres and its nutritional seeds.

Like hemp, flax is an annual plant, which is sown from seed and lives for one season before harvesting. It grows to about a metre in height, with attractive pale blue flowers, flourishing in northern temperate latitudes, where moderately moist summers yield soft, silky flax. At harvesting, the stems of the plant are pulled up by the root rather than cut at the base, which preserves the fibre length and retains moisture. Baling, decortication and blending produce beautifully soft textile yarns for woven upholstery fabrics incorporated into our Silk and Main Line Flax ranges.

### Flax facts and trivia:

- Flax fibres, seeds and shives are all used in a variety of products. In fact, the Latin name for flax is "Linum Usitatissimum" which literally means "most useful"
- It's from the Latin that we get "linen" – the common term for flax fibre – which in turn gives us "line" and "lingerie"! The seeds give us linseed oil and the oil gives us linoleum or lino
- If the world's flax fields were replaced with cotton, water usage would increase by 650,000 million m<sup>3</sup> and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would increase by 450,000 tonnes (source: European Commission Audit 2007)
- The earliest evidence of flax being used in textiles is dated as far back as 30,000 years ago
- Ancient Egyptians considered flax a symbol of purity and light. They called it "woven moonlight" and entombed their mummies in linen

# Not only are we using rapidly renewable bast fibres, we're also leading the way in recycled bast fibres from jute coffee sacks.

Jute is second only to cotton in terms of global production and consumption of plant-based textile fibres, used for bags, ropes, carpets, rugs and of course hessian cloth sacks for transporting foodstuffs such as coffee and cocoa beans. Thanks to our modern day coffee culture, these sacks are used in their millions, so there's no shortage of supply and they can be re-processed through mechanical recycling machines to bring them back to raw fibre. Adding wool creates a new generation of yarns and fabrics which are both renewable and recycled. Our first wool-recycled jute blend is Century – just add furniture.

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### Jute facts and trivia:

- The golden brown colour of jute and its value as a textile fibre have led to it being referred to as the "Golden Fibre"
- The largest global producers are India and Bangladesh, where jute is grown as rain fed crops in the Ganges Delta
- Jute grows the tallest of all the bast fibres, reaching up to an enormous 3.5metres tall by the time it's harvested
- Jute is even used as a geo-textile fabric, providing stability against soil erosion and landslides
- In the 1800s, Dundee became the jute capital of the modern world thanks to its expertise in weaving, whaling and ship-building. By the turn of the century it employed more than 50,000 people in over 100 mills (ships were built to transport the jute from India, and whale oil was used to soften the jute for weaving into a variety of textile products)
- In Nigeria, jute leaves are prepared in a sticky soup called 'ewedu' together with ingredients such as sweet potato, dried small fish or shrimp – delicious!



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## Wool – the other vital ingredient

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Nature's ultra intelligent fibre is one that needs no introduction. It's the perfect accompaniment to our natural bast fibre blends.

Having our own wool yarn spinning facility means that we've been able to fine-tune our innovative new yarn blends to develop optimum fibre ratios. These impart the individual characteristics of the bast fibre plants, yet retain the unique performance credentials of wool. Wool's smart abilities are well documented: it retains its beautiful appearance for longer; it has natural crimp, stretch, drape and handle; it is a breathable fibre which can absorb and evaporate moisture; and in fire situations it is difficult to ignite and forms a char against flaming. It's this ability which is enhanced further still in wool-bast fibre blends and warrants its own full page spread overleaf.

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### Wool facts and trivia:

- The average sheep's fleece produces about 4 kg of fibre, which can make up to 10 metres of fabric. It will go even further when mixed into bast fibre blends.
- In the beginning, textile fibres were all derived from natural sources such as wool and plants, but polyester consumption is now thirty times greater than wool, and sheep numbers have halved in the last 20 years.
- Wool is made from the structural protein keratin, which is the same as human hair – and we all know the beautiful colour effects achievable as it absorbs colour to its very core.
- Wool will easily biodegrade within one year whereas synthetic fibres such as polyester and nylon can take hundreds of years to decompose.
- Sheep are actually one of the 12 animals in the Chinese zodiac and are known as yáng. The year of the sheep is often thought to bring prosperity and promise.





# Our wool-bast fibre blends are as safe as houses. They all meet Crib 5 Medium Hazard flammability. Inherently. Naturally.

Out of all the technical standards that fabrics have to meet, we'd always argue that flammability performance is the most important due to its crucial safety implications in the event of a fire. The really clever thing about wool-bast fibre fabrics is that in combination they enhance the natural flame retardancy of wool by helping form a stronger char which acts as a barrier between the flame and the foam. It's the foam which can add fuel to the fire and also give off toxic fumes. Wool-bast fibre fabrics don't need any chemical treatments or backcoating. They're just a safe, reliable method of meeting the main UK contract flammability standard, BS 7176 Medium Hazard (Crib 5) to provide better fire security for commercial interiors and public spaces.

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### Flammability facts and trivia:

- BS 7176 is a performance standard based on BS 5852 in which there are eight ignition sources. The most frequently quoted are Ignition Source 0 (cigarette), Ignition Source 1 (match) and Ignition Source 5 (crib 5)
- Crib 5 is a 5 tier high wooden crib structure, originally intended to mimic a rolled up newspaper which catches fire on a chair
- The heat produced from the wooden crib is 16 times more intense than a match
- For a flammability pass to be recorded, all flaming must cease within 10 minutes and the foam cannot be burnt through its full thickness
- BS 7176 identifies "Hazard" categories linked directly to the combination of different ignition sources used in the flammability test
- Typical end-use examples for Medium Hazard fabrics include Public Buildings, Hotel Bedrooms, Restaurants, Places of Public Entertainment, Hospitals and Hostels

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## From field to fabric

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We've sown the seeds and they've bloomed into a complete range of innovative bast fibre fabrics, all with inherent flame retardancy. So which is your favourite?

Nettles, hemp, flax and jute. Wool. Even silk to add a touch of heightened luxury. These natural ingredients have been blended to perfection by our design and technical teams. They don't contain any nasties and they cater for a broad menu of tastes, furniture styles and price points in offices, education, hospitality and other contract environments. Inspiration stretches from the beautiful but bleak Yorkshire moorlands to the cultural textiles of nomadic tribes. Serve them up individually or get creative and work them in combo to create the ultimate environmental scheme.

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Fabric	Composition	Colours	Abrasion (5 year guarantee of wearability)	Flammability
Hemp	60% wool 40% hemp	31	50,000 Martindale cycles	BS 7176 Medium Hazard
Hebden	60% wool 40% hemp	13	50,000 Martindale cycles	BS 7176 Medium Hazard
Nettle Aztec	83% wool 17% nettle	8	40,000 Martindale cycles	BS 7176 Medium Hazard
Nettle Nomad	75% wool 25% nettle	3	40,000 Martindale cycles	BS 7176 Medium Hazard
Nettle Traveller	83% wool 17% nettle	3	40,000 Martindale cycles	BS 7176 Medium Hazard
Main Line Flax	70% wool 30% flax	41	50,000 Martindale cycles	BS 7176 Medium Hazard
Century	76% wool 14% recycled jute 10% polyamide	7	50,000 Martindale cycles	BS 7176 Medium Hazard
Silk	67% wool 22% flax 11% silk	21	50,000 Martindale cycles	BS 7176 Medium Hazard

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Top  
Century - manufactured  
using jute from coffee  
sacks blended with wool.

Middle Right  
Nettle Collection - three  
textile designs made from  
a wool nettle blend.

Left  
Main Line Flax - made  
from one of the oldest  
cultivated plants grown  
for its textile fibre.



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## Get in touch

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Will you turn over a new leaf and specify rapidly renewable bast fibre fabrics? You can get your hands on them by contacting us on-line or in person.

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