

Needle Felted Fungi



Materials:

- Thick quilting wadding
- Batts¹ wool felt fibre in colours of choice
- Felting mat – always use a felting mat/sponge when needle felting to prevent needle breakages
- Felting needle² – used size 38 (medium all purpose) and size 40 (fine for more detailed work)
- Scissors
- Optional – nepps³ and locks⁴

¹ A batt is wool that comes off a carding machine in a thick sheet/pad that is easily pulled into strips made from coarse short hair that needle felts beautifully.

² A felting needle has a series of notches at the tip with an L shaped top called the crank. The tip is sharp so care needs to be taken when using. After a lot of, or wrong use, the tips can break off so retrieve and dispose of safely. To avoid potential breakages insert and remove the felting needle at the same angle each time, don't twist or bend. When not in use stand it in the foam pad where you can see it. Hold it about 1cm up from the needle tip so the full needle length doesn't go in, this prevents large needle marks forming and gives a smoother finish without having the expense of buying more specialist needles. A leather finger/thumb guard can be used to protect your fingers from harm when holding your working project.

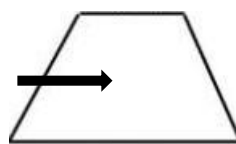
³ Nepps are very small felted wool balls that add texture and detail. To use in needle felting they need to be covered with wisps of fibre and felted over to keep in place.

⁴ Locks are fluffy curly fibres that add texture and depth.

Stalk:



Cut a small square of thick wadding. Trim the sides so the bottom is wider than the top, keep the trimmings for later. Roll lengthways into a stalk shape and lightly needle felt to join together.



Tug lengths of wool fibre from the batt long enough to wrap around the stalk or use two shorter lengths if easier. Any gaps are overlaid with more fibre. Tease apart widthways to thin it out. Wrap lengthways over the stalk (so it looks like an opened corn husk see below). Needle felt to just above half way point. Add more wool fibres as needed. The un-felted wisps act as 'glue' to attach the stalk to the cap.



Flat Cap:

Cut a circle of thick wadding, keep the trimmings for later. Tug lengths of wool fibre long enough, or near enough, to wrap around the circle top and bottom. Tease apart as given for the stalk so you are felting a thinner layer of wool fibre to begin with. Place the wadding circle into the centre of the fibres. Needle felt the wispy ends to the centre underside (gill area) all around the circle to catch in. Turn so the top is facing and needle felt until the fibres catch into the wadding. Pinch as if trying to peel it off, if it comes away from the wadding it needs more felting. Continue wrapping and needle felting top and bottom with fibres until you have good coverage.



Gather together all the wadding trimmings, separate so it looks like cotton wool. Add this to the underside to form and shape the gills, needle felt till it starts to firm up and smooth out. Add the prepared stalk centrally pushing down and holding onto it, needle felt the wisps around as shown below. Pull away longer wisps and needle felt back into the gills. Add further wisps of fibre to the underside gill area and needle felt well till you have good coverage. You can now add further

lengths of fibre over the stalk and gill to thicken up if wanted. To check the stalk is attached, gently try to pull it off, if it still feels loose needle felt more until it stays put.



You can trim the edges to create a smaller fungi cap after it has been felted. After trimming needle felt the edge to round it off again, needle felting is very forgiving and easy to reshape any mistakes or changes.



Round cap:

To make a rounded cap use any leftover wadding trimmings (or cut more wadding to make extra) and create a dome as shown below. Needle felt to join together. Add this centrally to your wadding circle before overlaying with felting fibre. To show this better, the dome has been added onto an already covered needle felted flat cap. This also illustrates if you change your mind, as I did in this case, you can convert from flat to a round cap. Finish off in the same way as given for the flat cap above, adding lengths of fibre over the top and underside needle felting until you are happy with coverage, adding the stalk centrally in the same way.





Round cap from a ball of wool fibres:

Wool fibres are shapeable, it's all about where and how you needle felt it. The rounded cap below was made with wool fibres from a 'scrap' bag I add leftover bits from projects and workshops to. It included clumps pulled from partly needle felted wool which is why it looks lumpy but perfectly useable. You can just grab handfuls of unused fibre from the batt and roll into a ball.

Roll the fibres into a rough ball shape. Needle felt into a more rounded shape and then into the middle to make a crater where the stalk will go. Turn it over and round off the top, it is lumpy looking at this stage but the more you needle felt the smoother it should become. Keep rounding the top, making a crater and rounding off the underside. I left this lightly felted, nice and squishy, with more felting it would have really firmed up. Overlay with lengths of new smooth fibre and needle felt, you will find it will then end up with a smoother finish. Make a stalk and add as given above.



There are many mushroom/fungi variants to take inspiration from. They don't have to be real to life and can be something from your imagination. Mix colours that appeal by overlaying wisps of fibre over each other while needle felting. Another way to mix colours is to lay colours on top of each other, pull apart, lay back on top, repeating until the desired colourway is created.



Examples of how locks have been used, on a cap as textured foliage, and under the gills as a frill.



Examples using nepps. Nepps will not easily needle felt in, they need to be covered with fine wisps of fibre to capture them in and then needle felted.



To add spots pull off a small amount of fibre and roll into a ball, needle felt into the cap using whatever colours you want.

Gillian Cain, Bowes Belles WI, Tyne & Wear South Federation
<https://www.facebook.com/gillcrafts>