



# Heather Goddess

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*Rooted in Slavic and Northern traditions, the Heather Goddess knitting pattern draws on the embroidery motif of goddess figures and the resilient plant heather, which thrives in the forests of Lapland. Inspired by ancient symbols and northern nature, the pattern weaves together stories of place and belonging. The top side of the mittens reveals a figure of a goddess surrounded by blooming heather, embodying the feminine spirit of protection and our connection with the Land. On the palm side, the pattern transforms into the plant itself – a long-standing and valued herb heather known to our ancestors for its healing and protective properties.*

During my first winter in Finland, nine years ago, I received beautiful woollen socks in natural white as a gift from a local friend, Mari. Though worn out, I still keep them. This simple yet meaningful gesture carried a deep sense of care and connection, echoing memories of my maternal grandmother, who spun yarn, dyed it, and knitted throughout her life. She was born in Ukraine, and during her childhood, the family was forced to move to Siberia. In the village, people would bring her old and worn woollen sweaters to be transformed into mittens or socks, essential for keeping warm during the long Siberian winters. When her health declined, and she spent most of her time in bed, she continued to knit. I remember that every visitor to our house would leave with a pair of woollen socks, a gesture that brought her joy. She also taught me how to form the first loops that begin the work, something I now value deeply.



◀ ◀ **FIGURE 1.** A heather plant in bloom in the forest of the Rovaniemi. Photograph: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2025.

◀ **FIGURE 2.** A knitted mitten in process on the background of a book by Sheila Paine (Paine, 2008), depicting an embroidery of a goddess figure. Photograph: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2025.

▲ **FIGURE 3.** A first sketch with a goddess figure on the mitten pattern template during the workshop held by Karoliina Erkinjuntti. Photograph: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2024.

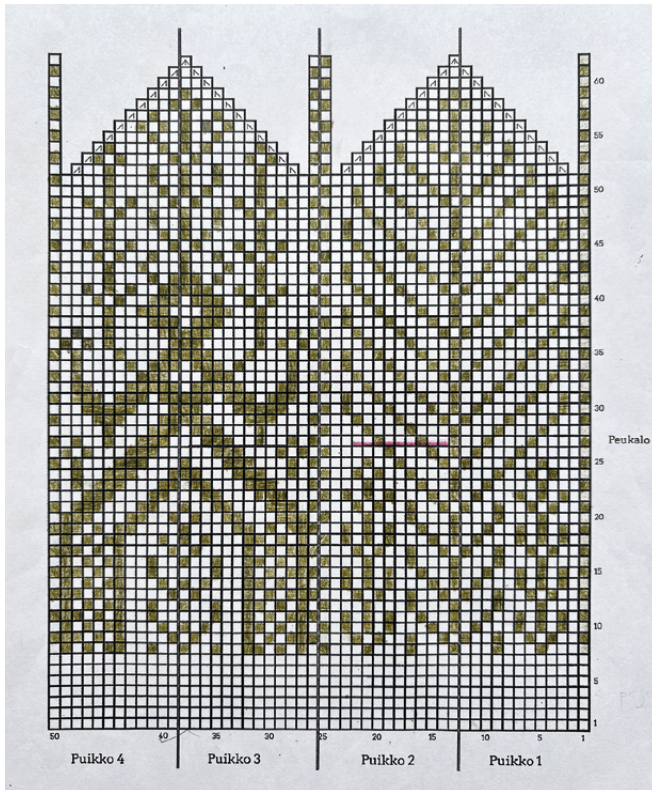
After she passed away, every encounter with wool and knitting reminds me of her and our shared moments of unravelling old wool garments and winding them into yarn balls, which she would transform into something new. Two years ago, I had a powerful experience connected with my grandmother when washing the wool I had dyed with madder root. The scent and the feel of soft, wet fibres in my hands brought a vivid sense of her presence. The memory was deeply embodied, and I became emotional, sensing how her knowledge and skills had been transmitted to me over years of watching her spinning the wool, knitting and listening to her stories.

I have carried my Slavic heritage across geographical borders, much as my grandmother did: from Ukraine to Siberia, from Siberia to the Middle East, and from there, I brought this invisible treasure

pouch with me to Finland. As I have slowly rooted myself in the North, a reconnection with my own roots has emerged and found expression through wandering in nature and through craft-making. Due to multiple factors such as cross-border migration and an urban lifestyle, the cultural heritage of my family has been partially forgotten and lost. Today, I can only imagine the visual symbols and stories my ancestors once carried to empower, protect, and sustain their cultural knowledge. Through my craft practice, I am slowly rediscovering these elements, and learning to communicate with them. Despite this process, I often experience a sense of being in-between: between cultures, between places, between worlds. This ongoing journey, however, enables me to slowly build a sense of belonging.

In designing my knitting pattern, I sought to merge two worlds: my Slavic heritage and my life in the North. The pattern's visual language is inspired by goddess figures found in both Slavic and Northern embroidery traditions (Kelly, 1996; Kovero & Kravtsov, 2024). These figures, often associated with protection, fertility, and continuity, offered shared symbolic groundwork across cultures. From this symbolic foundation, the pattern extends into my embodied relationship with the northern landscape. As the forest has become a place where I wander, dream, and heal, I searched for a plant that holds shared meaning and symbolism within the northern landscape. Heather drew my attention through its quiet beauty and fragility (Figures 1–2).

From the very beginning of the project, I chose to design a pattern for mittens, thinking of them symbolically. Hands are central to human experience: they carry, create, care, and sustain everyday life. As a mother and a crafter, I often pay attention to my hands while caring for my child, doing everyday tasks such as cooking and cleaning, and crafting with materials like wool and clay. In observing my hands in motion, I am reminded that they, too, require care, rest, and protection. Moreover, across different cultures, the goddess motif often appeared on ritual textiles (Kelly, 2011). This aspect adds another layer to the mittens, enhancing their functionality with a tender reminder of a daily care ritual.



▲ **FIGURE 4.** Final version of the *Heather Goddess* knitting pattern. Photograph: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2024.



▲ **FIGURE 5.** Knitting tests with various colour combinations. Photograph: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2025.



▲ **FIGURE 6.** Finnish wool yarn chosen for the mittens. Photograph: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2025

## From sketch to thread

At the knitting pattern design workshop by Karoliina Erkinjuntti, in April 2024, I drew the first goddess figure on a mitten template (Figure 3). In the following sketches, I reshaped the figure, gradually weaving a heather motif into the pattern on both sides of the mitten while considering the rhythm, stitch count, and carrying of the yarn to avoid long floats between the two colours (Figure 4). The next step was to translate the sketch into knitting.

In small knitting tests, I explored various shades of green, lilac, and purple in combination with natural white, seeking for both contrast and balance (Figure 5). The natural white base reflects the calmness and beauty of the winter northern landscape, complemented by purples and greens inspired by the colours of heather in bloom. Though heather flowers range from soft, pale lilac to vivid purple, the pattern can accommodate a variety of shades, allowing each knitter to follow their own preference.

To knit my mittens, I chose the natural-coloured Finnsheep yarn from Piessa Sheep Farm (Piessan Lammastila) as a base, and the green from Pirtti Spinning Mill (Pirtin Kehräämö). I aimed to keep the base pattern simple by using only two colours, while later highlighting the delicate heather flowers and the goddess heart through duplicate stitch (also known as Swiss darning) with the vivid purple Gotland wool yarn from Pohjolanpääsi Sheep Shop (Lammaspuoti Pohjolanpääsi). This technique allows adding details with embroidery-like stitching directly to the knitted surface (Figures 6–7).

## A Meditative Practice of Care

The design process was grounded in a combination of personal exploration, through reading, sketching, and knitting, and collective engagement within a knitting group, where participants developed their own patterns. The knitting itself became a space for deep concentration, allowing me to slow down. The repetitive gestures created a meditative rhythm, a shared presence between myself, the yarn, and the emerging pattern, where the act of making became as meaningful as the finished mittens (Figures 8–9). At the same time, regular meetings with the group fostered exchanges of knowledge, stories, and traditions related to wool and heritage. The participants'



▲ **FIGURE 7.** Duplicate stitch technique, applied through knitting loops. Photograph: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2025.



▲ **FIGURE 8.** Knitting by the fireplace at home. Photograph: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2025.



**FIGURE 9.** Heather Goddess mittens. Photograph: Tatiana Kravtsov, 2026.

diverse cultural backgrounds brought multiple perspectives into the shared space, where listening and sharing contributed to a sense of connection and mutual understanding.

While the image of the goddess with her empowering aspects appears across many cultures, including Slavic and Northern traditions, my own journey seeks to engage with my own cultural heritage through craft and visual interpretation. The *Heather Goddess* pattern embody the revitalisation of the sacred meanings of the goddess motif and shared nature-related culture through a dialogue that bridges generations and geographies, intertwining the traditional and contemporary (Härkönen et al., 2018; Kovero & Kravtsov, 2024).

Knitted garments carry stories, and developing this pattern, I sought to reflect my own memories, lived histories, and embodied experiences. While crafting the mittens, I often thought of my grandmother, whose hands were rarely still and who created warmth for others. The spirit of her resilience and care is expressed through the heather plant, which thrives in the northern landscape. The *Heather Goddess* knitting pattern becomes more than a visual design; it is a living thread between

past and present, between inherited memory and lived experience. Through making, I continue a lineage of care and knowledge carried across generations. Rooted in both Slavic and Northern traditions and nature, the pattern reflects an ongoing process of weaving together memory, identity, and place into a sense of belonging.

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