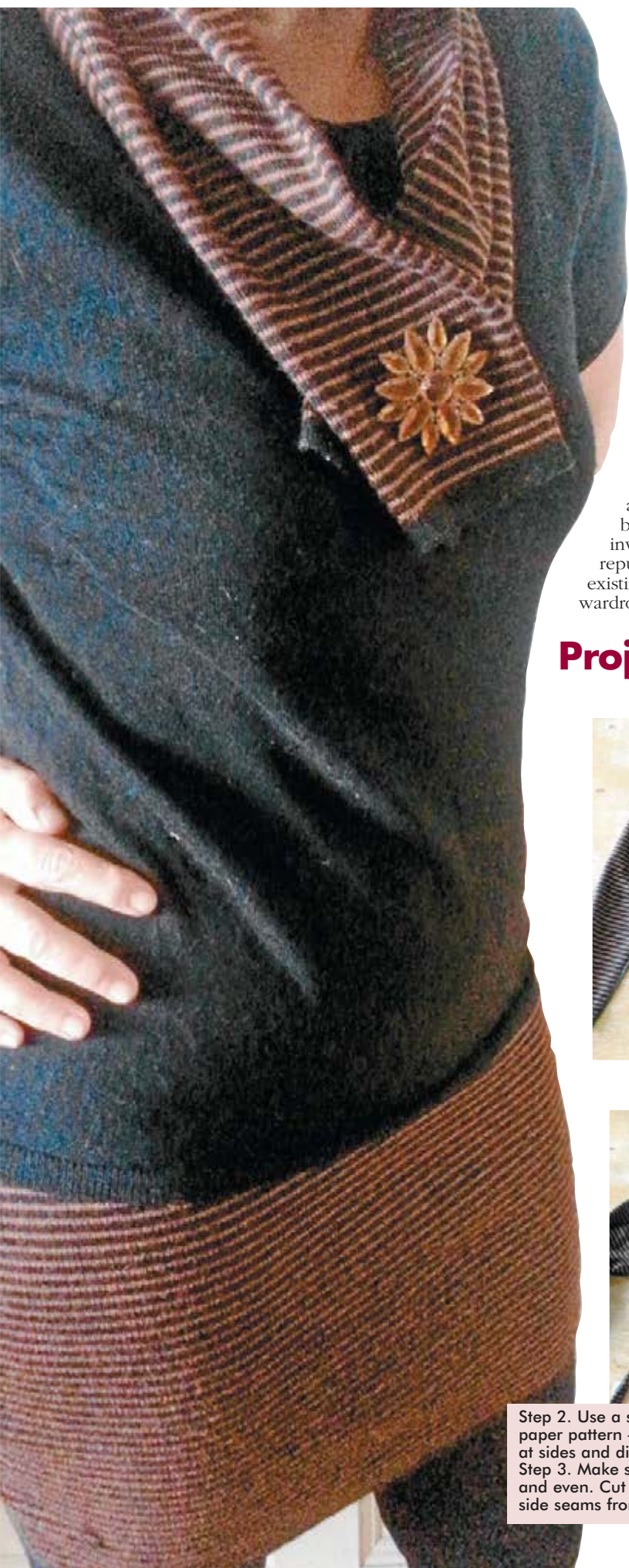


Nurturing creativity



THE clothes you wear are statements about your personality, values and perspective. Every day you make choices on what to wear but unless you or friends and family are empowered with simple sewing and design skills, you are a slave to current fashion in-store and online. Constantly seeking new clothes can be time-consuming, expensive and overwhelming. The alternative is to become more inventive and reuse, repurpose, and recreate existing pieces in your wardrobe.

As an agricultural scientist, I value the resources, effort and cost that go into producing natural fibres. That's what led me to find creative ways to rescue garments made from wool, linen, cotton or silk, and recast them for a second life.

In this column, we are following the heart on a creative journey to inspire novel ways to upcycle discarded natural fibre garments found in your wardrobe, cast off by your friends or harvested in opportunity shops.

There's something so authentic about fabrics that spring from nature – they feel so good to touch, they wash well and don't generate static electricity.

We all have unused items in our wardrobes – ones we haven't worn for years but can't bear to toss. Repurposing is entirely possible. You just need courage and confidence to apply scissors to that long woollen jumper (circa 1990s) and recast it as something else – skirt and wrap scarf, for example.

There is no gene for creativity. It is within us all and can be nurtured by observing, experimenting and playing. Being more creative involves loosening up, freeing oneself from rigid and conventional thinking. It involves activating your imagination and seeing things differently.

Creativity is individually driven and knows no bounds. With upcycling and any creative pursuit, the secret is to press on. There are no failures, only projects that require you to keep them evolving until you are satisfied with the result.

Upcycling pre-loved natural fibre garments enables you to enjoy multiple benefits through improved wellbeing and ecological health.

You can discover your unique style; develop skills in sewing and stitching; feel empowered with more clothing choices; gain affordable wardrobe options; keep your hands busy with productive habits; and value the environment with its limited natural resources.

As you begin your creative journey, claim a space where your sewing machine can stay set up and buy the very best scissors you can afford.

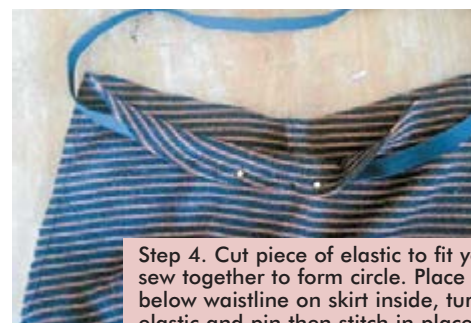
Let go of the idea that your creations need to be 'perfect' and instead derive satisfaction from having made them yourself. And look forward to the ultimate satisfaction of a fashion retailer asking where you got your skirt!

● Please send your feedback and inspiration to jane@textilebeat.com

Project: Transform a jumper into a skirt and scarf



Step 1. Select an old wool jumper, turn inside out. Note: it must fit around your hips.



Step 4. Cut piece of elastic to fit your waistline, sew together to form circle. Place elastic just below waistline on skirt inside, turn down over elastic and pin then stitch in place. Note: Take care not to catch elastic as you sew – it needs to move freely through waistband.



Step 2. Use a straight skirt to create a cloth/paper pattern – a rectangular shape curving in at sides and dipping at centre front and back. Step 3. Make sure jumper seams sitting flat and even. Cut skirt from jumper, pin and sew side seams from bottom to top.



Step 5. Cut sleeves off under arms. Turn one sleeve right side out then feed it into other that is inside out. Pin and stitch together. Turn right side out to form scarf that you can pin with a brooch.

Explanatory notes: I find it unnecessary to machine-neaten edges if the garment is sewn immediately. You may not need to cut sides of the jumper, just shape in at waistline, ensuring smooth transition from old to new seams. If jumper is not long enough, use a panel of stretch fabric as waistband at top of skirt. If jumper has holes or stains, use buttons to disguise. If you want a skirt pattern, try Kwik Sew pattern for stretch knits.