

{ MATERIAL OF THE MONTH }

FANTASTIC FRITZ

Rob Denson explains how to make the most of that “shiny stuff on a string”



F RITZ! THE MERE MENTION OF THIS much maligned modern synthetic is enough to send purists into paroxysms of rage. The infamous Blob, with its dubious reputation and somewhat bulky and vulgar appearance is an anti-fly to many and must shoulder a sizeable proportion of the blame for bringing fritz into disrepute. But if you put prejudice to one side and look at fritz with open eyes, you'll see an incredibly versatile and killing material highly prized by enlightened fly-tyers the world over.

Originally a spin-off from the rag trade, fritz has evolved over the last 30 years from chunky, rather brutal Blob fritz to slim, sparse micro-straggle, providing a variety for virtually every situation on reservoirs and wild waters from huge water-shifting lures to delicate nymphs and Spiders. The range of types, sizes, colours and densities can be overwhelming to the newcomer, but you'll be missing a trick if you let that put you off. Read on to learn how to make sense of the myriad options.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB DENSON



BLOB
The dreaded Blob in tequila livery. Love it or hate it, it's as basic and effective as fly-tying gets. Did you ever consider that its success is largely due to how the blob “matches the hatch” in a daphnia bloom? One of the wonders of fritz.



CORMORANT
When a simple, bold body shape is required for flies like Cormorants and mini-lures, this very short (2mm) fritz with densely packed, fluorescent and translucent strands is the perfect choice. The Cormorant pictured is quick and easy to tie but the effort-reward ratio is as good as it gets.



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DABBLER
The lower the density of strands, the more movement we get from fritz. 10mm micro-straggle fritz is sparse and mobile — the perfect choice, then, for this sparse Straggle Dabbling. Tie in at the tail, wind up to the head, then rib and hackle as per any other traditional wet-fly. One of my most successful Dabblers ever, thanks in no small part to the micro straggle.



FRY
Long (15mm-20mm) strands of free-flowing black and gold straggle fritz blend beautifully with the rabbit wing and hen shoulder hackle on this fry pattern. Repeat single turns of fritz, then a slim bunch of rabbit, tied 'hog style to create a very fishy illusion.



HOPPER
This lively, buggy foam Hopper seldom gets refused when presented nicely and has got me out of many a jam over the last ten years or so. The “black” 10mm micro-straggle fritz is actually composed of mixed opaque, translucent and UV strands, giving an overall black feel with a subtle splash of UV and plenty of movement — a deadly cocktail for cruising fish.



CRUNCHER
Just a few strands of UV fritz stripped from the rope then tied in behind the hackle give a real lift to this Olive Cruncher in bright sunshine. This technique is a great way to add small amounts of flash or UV, plus welcome extra movement to delicate flies like nymphs, dry-flies and emergers.



HUMUNGOUS
The Humungous, or Shuggy, needs no introduction. The ultimate baitfish pattern uses short (6mm-8mm) densely packed fritz “chenille” to devastating effect in this classic pattern. The short, stiff strands imitate the shimmer of a small fish beautifully. Movement is provided by winding a long grizzle hen hackle through the fritz. ■

SIZES



Fritz is usually listed and labelled in mm. The measurement refers to the radius of the strand from the central core, as this will be the length of strand that stands proud of the fly when wound on to the hook shank.

TYPES

Tying with fritz is child's play. Simply strip a few strands from the end of a length to expose the rope, tie in and wind tightly in touching turns. Don't let the array of brands, sizes and colours confuse you — they're all just strands of shiny stuff attached to a piece of string. As you can see below, the main variables are: density of strands, length of strands, and of course, colours and translucency. The important thing is to choose the right type and size for the job.



20mm, sparsely strung, multi-coloured. Lots of flash and movement, ideal for lures, mini-lures, wet-flies. Hook sizes from 6 to 10.



10mm Blob fritz. Densely packed strands, less movement. Good for lures and Blobs on sizes 8 to 10.



4mm peacock, medium density. Wet-flies, nymphs, dry-flies, Boobies. Size 14 to 10.



15mm straggle. Medium to sparse. Lures, mini-lures and large wet-flies. Sizes 6 to 10.



10mm straggle. Sparse. Great for wet-flies, nymphs, Cormorants and mini-lures. Sizes 8 to 12.



15mm straggle. Sparse. Solid colour, translucent. Wet-flies, nymphs, Cormorants and mini-lures. Sizes 8 to 12.