

Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

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From The Editor –

February always brings thoughts of sweetness, femininity, nostalgia, and Victoriana. We hope you find a tad of all in this month's issue of *Bear In Mind*.

It seems that many of the new patterns emerging on the market are taking a step away from traditional Heirloom sewing. Play clothes are wonderful, but little ones also enjoy 'dressing up'. Wasn't that one of your favorite games to play when you were a little tyke? It was such a delight to raid your mom or grandmother's closet for lacey blouses, scarves, and patent high heeled shoes. And of course back in those days, a hat and gloves were part of the ensemble!

Trisha's beautiful Swiss faille dress in rose, with Swiss tulle trim (stock no. E-301) is Victoriana, sweetness, and nostalgia personified. Sewing with tulle trims is not as intimidating as some might think, and oh so feminine are the results. (Note: See my articles in the October and November/December 2012 issues of *Bear In Mind* to learn more about tulle.) Thank you Trisha for, once again, sharing with our readers how a pattern can have many faces.

If you have transformed a pattern for a totally new look, we would love to hear from you and have you share with our readers.

From all of us, we wish you a Beautiful and Sweet Valentine Day.

Sheila

Welcome Back Trisha!

We are delighted to welcome Trisha Smith back as our guest artist this month. You will remember she shared her beautiful 'Heirloom Pillow Case' dress in the May, 2011 issue of *Bear In Mind*. (Go to our website: www.bearthreadsltd.com, click on Newsletters and you can read her article from that issue.) By the way, her pattern line, Trisha's Treasures, has now published that dress as *Lily Joy*, just in time for your Easter sewing.



Trisha is a delightful, cute and energetic young lady. Her sassy patterns are a reflection of her personality and attention to detail. She was fortunate to have traveled and studied with Elizabeth Travis Johnson for 11 years. You will see her around the country teaching for guilds, shops and Saga groups. She is a regular teacher at the Martha Pullen School of Art Fashion.

Trisha lives in Franklin, Tennessee with her husband Rob. They have two married sons and are blessed with one grand-daughter, Lily Rhea. Thanks, Trisha!

From Casual Fun to Beautifully Dressy

With the birth of our first grandchild 9 months ago, my world was changed forever. I grew up with two brothers which I dearly love. When Rob and I got married and started our family, God blessed us with two precious sons that mean the world to us. And then, many, many, year later, much to our surprise we found out that the soon to be birth of our first grandchild would bring a girl into our lives. My joy knew no bounds. As rewarding as it is to sew for a baby boy, there are just so many more possibilities when sewing for a girl. One look through the Bear Threads catalog will send your mind whirling with ideas of all the beautiful garments you could make using their fabulous products.

After looking and dreaming for a while I decided on this idea. I wanted to use my Addyson dress pattern, which is a casual fun dress and turn that same dress into a beautiful dressy dress using Bear Threads' Faille fabric and embroidered net edging. I am so pleased with the final result. My desire is that I can help you and your customers create wonderful one of a kind garments for the special children in your life through the garments you will lovingly make, "just for them".

My focus in this article is to talk about gathering. Hopefully, these little tips will take the pain out of doing gathers, make them easier to work with, and help you complete your garment so you will have the most beautiful graceful gathers ever. I hope you find these tips to be helpful as you are working on future garments.

Machine Needle: My needle of choice is a Microtex size 80. This size needle works well on most fabrics. You may need to go up to a size 90 or down to a size 70 depending on the weight of the fabric you are sewing on.

Stitch: Set machine for a Straight Stitch. The stitch length can vary due to several factors. The weight of the fabric plays a big part. The heavier the fabric the longer the stitch length will need to be. When sewing on heavier fabrics, it may be necessary to use a 4.5 - 6.0 stitch length. On lightweight fabrics, such as Swiss Batiste, Lawn, or Dotted Swiss, a stitch length of 3.5 - 4.5 usually works really well.

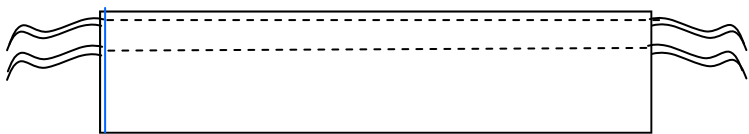


Thread: Use all-purpose Metrosene when stitching gathering rows. This thread is stronger than the lightweight machine embroidery thread and will not break as you are pulling on it to gather your fabric. Leave long thread tails at the beginning and the end. Hold the thread tails until you have taken 3 – 4 stitches into the fabric to prevent a bird's nest from building up under the foot and to prevent the stitch from locking if you sew off into the air. Always stitch with right side of fabric facing up. This will place the bobbin thread on the wrong side of the fabric.



Let's Get Started

Mark center front of skirt fabric. Draw a line on your fabric where you want to start the gathering stitch at center back. As you stitch each row of gathering threads, have the needle start on the exact drawn line.



Notice that since the two rows of stitching were started in the exact same spot (on the drawn line) the stitches are directly even with each other on both rows. This is very helpful because if you start each row at the exact same spot, when you start pulling on the bobbin thread tails, the gathers will pull up and almost look like you pleated it with a smocking pleater.

Before beginning to pull on the bobbin threads, cut the needle threads to be only about 2" long. This will help you remember not to pull on the needle threads since they are now shorter.

As you pull on the bobbin threads to gather the dress, hold the thread tails with equal tautness so the gathers will be straight and do not slant.

On this dress, I started pulling gathers up at each center back and stopped at the side seams. I feel like this is easier than sliding the gathers from the back all the way around to the center front. To gather the skirt front, I slid a strong straight pin under the gathering stitches at each side seam and pulled up gently until I created a loop that was large enough for me to get my finger through. I continued to pull on the threads to completely gather the skirt front.

Match center front of skirt to center front of outer bodice and also match side seams and at the back. Distribute gathers evenly and pin well. At each side seam, I wrap the thread loops around a pin in a figure eight to anchor the gathers and prevent them from sliding. Stitch gathered skirt to bodice stitching in the middle of the two gathering rows.

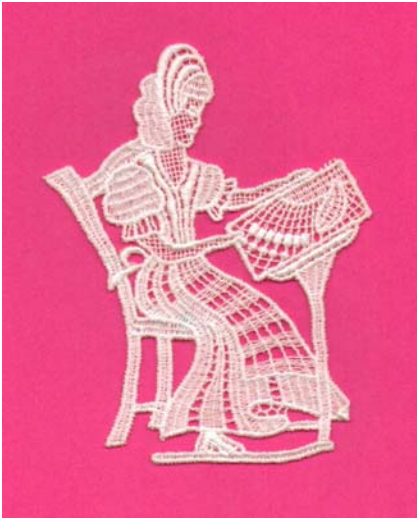
Note: Details of the dress construction would be the same as the Addyson pattern guidesheet states. You can follow it completely just leaving off the flower pocket. The one exception is – you will need to cut the neck edging down to the needed size and then follow the neck ruffle instructions.



Trisha's Treasures
"Addyson"
in Swiss Faille
Trimmed in E-301
Swiss embroidered Tulle

TO 'HOOP' OR NOT TO 'HOOP'

This is an often asked question by those just beginning to embroider. For the beginner who is shopping for threads, fabric and needles, the next logical question is do I need a hoop. And if so, what kind? In many cases, it is a matter of preference. In other circumstances there are rules of thumb best to be followed. I will share with you my thoughts on this 'hoop' dilemma.



The earliest hoops were known as Tambour frames and were mounted on legs to stand as a piece of furniture. Ladies could then employ both hands to embroider with the stand situated in front of their chair. The hand held frame evolved from this early version. The years have seen them made of many materials such as wood, bone, ivory and later metal and plastic. The basic concept is that of a pair of concentric circles or elliptical rings. One ring is larger and fitted with a tightening device, usually a metal screw. The embroidery work is placed between the rings with the outside ring tightened to hold the fabric taut. The work can be moved about. Today many needle pointers like the scroll frames. These hold the entire piece being worked. It is made of four pieces of wood - 2 rollers at the top and base, and 2 side pieces. The tapestry can be rolled to the area to be worked and the entire piece is held tight.

Metal hoops are equipped with a spring that allows the hoop to expand to accommodate the fabric. Generally speaking these are not recommended as the springs eventually give way and no longer hold the fabric tight.

Wooden hoops that are made with a slotted screw head are favorites. Find a small screwdriver that fits the slot and keep it in your sewing bag! Wooden hoops come in a variety of sizes both in the hoop diameter and the hoop edge. Choose a hoop edge size to accommodate the weight of your fabric.

Plastic hoops have become quite popular and don't have the down side of wooden hoops which stretch or break. Most also have a handy hand screw knob so that you don't have to carry the small screwdriver.

Several cautions:

- 1) Beware that some projects cannot be washed or ironed when completed. In this case a hoop must be **LARGER** than the entire finished area including background so as not to leave 'hoop marks' which can be permanent.
- 2) It is also a good idea to wrap either the inner or outer circle to protect your fabric. Personally I prefer to wrap the inner circle, and prefer gauze to other products that will be bulky and not allow you to secure the outer ring tightly.

Those of you who have been fortunate to study Madeira Embroidery know that the ladies of Madeira do not use a hoop. All of their work is done over their finger using a 'finger shield'. These may be made of leather or plastic, or you can make your own of vinyl or other material. The main idea is to protect your finger from needle pricks.

In conclusion, to hoop or not? The goal of any embroidery, whether it is needlepoint, crewel, appliqué or cross stitch, is consistent, even stitches achieved by even tension. If you need a hoop to accomplish this, do so. If you are gifted with consistency, or if you find the hoop cumbersome, try stitching over your finger.

No Matter,
Happy Stitching, Sheila

TOKEN VALENTINE GIFT IDEAS

The receipt of even the smallest Valentine remembrance brings a smile to everyone. And you will be rewarded, with much satisfaction, by the giving of these 'random acts of kindness.' I have listed a few ideas below to start your creative juices flowing.

- "I think you are purr-fect!" Anything with a cat (bookmark, sticker, trinket) would be cute with this saying for the cat lover you know.
- "It is 'ruff' when you are not around". Anything with a dog (bookmark, sticker, trinket) would be cute with this saying for 'neighbor Neil' with a dog!
- "You rev me up", or "I 'wheelie' like you!" For a man, this saying with a small toy car would make for a fun Valentine! This one is for me - Jim could never have too many cars.
- "I'm your number one fan", or "I am your biggest fan", or "You blow me away!" A paper fan or 'A' battery operated personal fan would be loved!
- "You really measure up" or "You rule!" - For the seamstress, a measuring tape.

- "You are the highlight of my life". How about a highlighter pen?
- And finally....Another for the seamstress who is maturing... "I have my eye on you"! With a fun pair of reading glasses or magnifying glasses.

However you celebrate Valentine, make it fun, beautiful, romantic, and ugh...low calorie. Sorry, remember you just came off the 'Christmas' diet!

Sheila

FYI

Hari Kuyo Day

February 8th is Hari Kuyo Day in Japan. A day in which worn out and broken needles are honored for their good service.

Thanks to the Camilla Chapter,
EGA
And now you know!

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