



Ever Decreasing Circles

Using the Flower Stitcher

Valerie Campbell-Harding

At the end of a year-long course on machine embroidery, I suggested that we try the feet and attachments that we had not used so far. Practising what I preached, I fished out a Japanese Flower Stitching foot that Janome used to sell for their sewing machines. Fortunately the instructions, though brief, were still there. The foot did not fit on the Janome 9000, but did fit the Bernina 180 using a Standard shank, and also on the Pfaff 7570. The Brother has an extension shank which will also fit the Janome 9000, and other machines do not need anything extra.



The Flower Stitcher

I did a few samples and then took it in for the students to try. They took it in turns and were immediately hooked. There was one panic on the first morning when the whole thing seized up, but some oil did the trick and we were away. This is important to know as it always seems to happen but, once oiled, the Stitchers do not seem to need it again. Try moving the lever up and down and put a drop of oil wherever metal rotates against metal.

Everyone wanted one of these attachments, so we tried telephoning all over the country. Deep depression set in as none had been imported for about five years. However Jo Edge did a search on the Internet and found two places that sold them, and the addresses are at the end of the article. After I demonstrated what could be done with the Flower Stitcher at the autumn shows, so many people ordered one that there was a distinct world shortage for a while. Now a couple of retailers have brought them into the country and will do mail order.

How it works

Set up your machine as usual, and attach the Flower Stitcher with the lever on top of the needle bar.

Adjust the Presser foot pressure to maximum if you can. If you cannot, then use a thicker fabric. One layer of felt should be enough, but there might be trouble if you try stitching on transparent fabrics alone.

By loosening the large screw and sliding the plastic ring from side to side, the size of the circle can be adjusted. You can also move the position of the needle to give larger and smaller circles.

Then you just stitch, and the fabric will rotate automatically, with the last stitch meeting the first one extremely accurately.

Experiments



First try straight stitching, then zig zag, then all your patterns. Some will need a second or third layer of stitching to give more emphasis, and some longer patterns will need three or four rounds to make anything interesting.

Left: Straight stitch, satin stitch and some patterns.



Try stitching smaller circles inside larger ones.

Left: Patterns using metal thread on felt.



Of course, try changing the tension, or using two threads in your needle, or different threads.

Left: Satin stitch circles on builder's scrim.



Try different fabrics, some of which may have been previously painted, printed or stitched. Try on water-soluble fabric or paper, on loosely-woven fabrics, or on papers which can be wetted and partially torn away after stitching.

Left: Straight and satin stitch circles on water soluble fabric.



Try stitching massed complete circles or only semi-circles.

Solid satin stitched circles can be cut out and threaded onto braids or cords. They could be folded along an edge, or wrapped around a cord.

Left: Satin stitch circles cut out and applied to felt with added stitching to secure them.

Below left: Satin stitch circles cut out and applied to a painted and stitched fabric. Torn scraps of circles stitched on water-soluble fabric were added and secured with free embroidery in running stitch.

Below right: Satin stitch circles cut out and applied to a solidly stitched belt.



Other experiments are shown in the photographs.

You will obviously find even more ways of using this fascinating toy, and can combine the circles with whatever type of embroidery you are doing now.

Left: Tri-lobal nylon was spread all over felt and stitched with overlapping circles using straight stitch. The embroidery was melted using a heat gun.

Below left: The same technique but holes were cut within the satin stitched circles, and scraps of circles stitched on water-soluble fabric were held down with free embroidery.

Below right: Satin stitched circles on a piece of brocaded fabric. This piece was applied to felt and straight stitch circles used to blend the joins and texture the felt. Finally stitched letters were secured with free embroidery.



Left: A book-wrap to keep all the samples in. Satin stitched circles were wrapped over a zigzag cord.

Below left: A vessel made using satin stitch circles on various papers and fabric. A large piece of fabric was decorated, then each rectangle was cut out and edged separately, then all joined together with a zig zag stitch.

Below right: A detail of the fabric.



Where to buy it. The cost in the UK is around £14.99.

UK:

Franklyn's of Colchester, tel. 01206 563955 or 574758.

The World of Sewing, 56 Camden Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Tel. 01892 536314

North America:

Nancy's Notions, www.nancysnotions.com. She calls it the Flower
Stitch foot.

Ultimate Sewing and Vac, www.sewingandvac.com

Sadly, Valerie Campbell-Harding died in 2006. She leaves a legacy for stitchers with her many books and articles such as this one.