

It Starts with a Vision



Like most of our sewing projects, this newsletter began with a vision of the finished project. After contemplating a vision of the finished project, we start to collect the things we need to turn that vision into a reality. All the decisions about color, fiber content, and pattern are made and the tools are assembled to bring it all together.

In the same way, I have collected news, information and interesting tidbits to share with you. I have carefully put them together just as we construct a new garment or a quilt, each piece combining with the others to make the whole.

My vision is to bring you this news and historical and factual information, tips and techniques as well as conversations with others. I hope that you will offer questions and topics that I can dig into and find answers. I am not limiting the scope of this newsletter to contain only quilting or only garment techniques. There are

many techniques that apply to all the sewing circles, quilt, garment and home decorating alike.

The newsletter come to you in an electronic format that you can easily print or save if you choose. Live links will be available so you can click through to additional information if it is available.

There are various sewing and quilting information sources available to you. I hope you find mine a worthwhile addition to your reading list.

Julie Peri

Editor

A Place to Keep Your Pins

We all have a little pillow or magnet sitting beside our sewing machines. The little glass or metals heads standing at attention, ready to be called into action. Have you ever wondered where the pincushion came from?

Looking back to the time before industrialization, pins were made by hand and were considered very valuable. They were made from bone, wood, thorns, and later bronze and iron. Pins were used as a way to fasten clothes in addition to sewing. One never knew when a pin or needle would come in handy. They were often kept in fancy boxes of

bone, ivory or silver as a way to protect the owner from being pricked and the pin or needle from breaking.

The little pillows that we are now familiar with started to appear in the 1700's. These pillows were elaborately decorated. During Queen Victoria's reign pincushions were worn as an accessory, dropping from their waist.

Later, the embroidery on the cushion held messages of political views, propaganda, and love. Historical events were also commemorated with pincushions, such as the birth or death of royalty.

Pincushions were popular gifts with messages of love,

wishes for the newly married couple or a child's name and birthday.

In today's world the pincushion is an indispensable tool that comes in many wonderful shapes and sizes. Turn the page for a few links on making your own personalized pillows.



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Cool Tools



Even the most unglamorous of tools can make a surprising difference in how we accomplish what we do. Let's take a look at the simple marking pencil. Marking pens and pencils are used to transfer notches, darts, pleats and more from the sewing pattern to the fabric. We can choose from water soluble and air soluble pens as well as various chalk and graphite pencils. While all the marking pens and pencils do a great job at transferring marks, there are some things to keep in mind about each type.

Chalk pencils provide a nice line that can be brushed away when you are finished. Keep in mind, your lines will start out very sharp when the pencil is freshly sharpened. As the lead wears the line widens, providing a margin of error that you may not want. Make adjustments in your marking placement to compensate for the wider lines or sharpen frequently.

Air and water soluble pens are also available. These are best used on washable fabrics. Some fibers, dyes or finishes may not react well to this type of marking device. Air soluble pens may not work well in humid environments. Both air and water soluble marks can usually be removed by rinsing the area. Some pens may be iron erasable, while pressing may "set" the marks for others. Make sure to read the manufacturer's directions before you reach for the iron.

A newer marking option is the mechanical pencil with ceramic lead. The new lead glides across

the fabric surface, providing a smooth line without distortion. I am sure you have experienced marking devices that pull and drag the fabric. These ceramic leads are very small creating fine lines that remain consistent. Finer lines means better sewing accuracy. Most ceramic pencils come with an erasure or are water soluble. There are lead refills available in a variety of colors as well as erasure refills.

Fabrics will react differently to each type of marking device. Always test your choice of marking device on a section of fabric that will not be included in the finished project to be sure the marks can be removed to your satisfaction. Make sure to remove all marks prior to laundering as some laundry chemicals may also "set" your markings. Rinse your project in cold water before laundering, even if you are using the air erasable markers. You don't want to see those blue lines reappear after washing.

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gazette \gə-'zet\ n

1: Newspaper **2:** an official journal
3 Brit: an announcement in an official gazette

A Simple Pincushion

Shouldn't we all have a personalized pincushion to sit beside our sewing machine or favorite chair? Maybe you need a smaller one you can take to class with you. I have a cupcake pincushion that a friend made for me. Pincushions make great gifts for your secret sewing pal and for your best friend or class companion. If you would like to make one for your friends, here are a few links to get you started:

Tin Can Pincushion

<http://www.designspongeonline.com/2008/04/diy-wednesdays-tin-can-pincushion.html>

Soda Bottle Cap Pincushion

<http://www.craftstylish.com/item/945/how-to-make-pretty-pincushions>

Square Pincushion

[http://paperstringcloth.blogspot.com/2007/07/pincushion-](http://paperstringcloth.blogspot.com/2007/07/pincushion-tutorial.html)

[tutorial.html](#)

Flower Pot Pincushion

<http://thelongthread.com/?p=1002>

Simple Pincushion

<http://www.purlbee.com/very-easy-pincushions/2006/11/3/sweet-pincushion.html>

Carrot and Mouse Pincushions

<http://mybyrdhouse.blogspot.com/search/label/Pincushion>

Stop and Stretch

It's Saturday morning. You have plans to sew all day and finish your next favorite blouse or table runner. Remember to stop periodically, get up and move around. You'll be able to accomplish more if you do. Working in the same position for hours is very tiring. By changing positions or taking short breaks, you give your

muscles a rest and they are ready to return to the task at hand, finishing that project. A break can be as simple as getting up to press your seams or to refill your water glass. While you are up stretch your arms, your neck, and your back. Our bodies were not designed to be hunched over the sewing machine. While it may feed your mind, it can

also fatigue your body. The same principles apply as when you sit at a desk for hours at a time. There are many resources available discussing stretches you can do at your desk, or in our case, the sewing machine. Give yourself a rest and accomplish more.

Do you Bamboo?

As you walk into most fabric stores today or shop online you will notice bamboo everywhere. You can buy knits, wovens and batting made from bamboo fibers and blends. Should you give it a go? Well, here are a few things to help you decide.

Bamboo is a renewable fiber that can be grown without the petroleum based pesticides that are typically used with cotton. Organic bamboo is grown in this manner and adheres to the strict guidelines of the international organic standard.

Most of the products that we would purchase have some chemical processing of the

bamboo plant to break down the woody stems to a starchy pulp that can then be used to create the fibers we love. This chemical processing creates the soft fibers that we want in textiles. There are strict controls over the manufacturing process to reduce emissions, filter and reclaim chemicals to reduce waste.

Once the fibers have been created, bamboo has better absorption properties than cotton and so uses less dyestuff. Bamboo absorbs the dye faster and shows the colors better.

One of the first things you will notice about bamboo products

is how soft they are. It is also very breathable and is naturally resistant to bacteria. As a result, it is a great fiber to wear against the skin and a great fiber to use in a quilt.

So, do you bamboo? Maybe it's time to give it a try. Here are a few places to start looking:

[Fairfield Processing Bamboo Batting](#)

[Vogue Fabrics](#)

ARE YOU
LOOKING FOR
"GREEN"
FABRIC? HERE
ARE A FEW
FACTS ABOUT
BAMBOO
FABRIC AND
BATTINGS.

Sew Tasty!

Coffee Cake Muffins

Crumb Topping

2 T. butter
2 T. Packed brown sugar
3 T. flour
¼ t. cinnamon

Cream together butter and sugar. Add flour and cinnamon. Set aside.

Batter

1½ c. flour
½ c. sugar
2 t. baking powder

½ t. salt
1 egg
⅔ c. milk
3 T. canola oil

Sift together the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Stir the liquids into the dry ingredients, mixing enough to dampen the flour. Spoon into muffin tins that have been greased or lined with paper. Sprinkle with the crumb topping.

Bake at 425 for 20 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.

Makes 12 muffins



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Laurie MacDonald from Chili Pepper Quilts

How long have you been sewing/quilting and what got you started?

I have been quilting for 10 years now; my sister got me started. I used to do fancy needlework, that was my great love. My sister was the quilter - I used to look at all the beautiful things she had done and thought it was just wonderful, but as beautiful as it all was, I didn't think it was for me. Then I did just a small quilt to frame one of my needlework samplers - and that was it - I was hooked! From that point on, the needlework threads and linens got put away and the cotton pieces started piling up. I've never looked back!

Why did you decide to start designing and selling your patterns?

I did some paper piecing patterns from magazines and the internet, just like everyone else does. It was a frustrating experience, nothing ever fit properly and I spent more time ripping things out than I did sewing. Then I did the beautiful Wedding Star paper pieced pattern by Judy Niemeyer - and I was in heaven! It was so well done that it was completely frustration free and I loved every second I spent working on it. I then moved on to a different pattern designer's paper pieced pattern and was back in the land of total frustration. Part way through the pattern I decided even I could do a better job of making a pattern, so I went ahead and did my own. And I had so much fun with it that I've never stopped. That was a few years ago, and I quickly realized that designing and building the pattern was even more fun than actually making it. I started up Chili Pepper Quilt Patterns 3 years ago, and now I just keep on going. I love to come up with designs that are a little out of the ordinary, maybe a different shape or a

different use of fabric than a traditional bed quilt. Every time I do a new pattern, there are always one or two little parts that inspire a new design, so the drawing board is loaded up and I know I'll be happily designing my heart out for many years to come. The local quilters in Victoria BC seemed to like the designs I came up with, so I branched out over Canada and am now expanding to other countries.

What is your favorite part of designing?

When I'm designing, the first thing I always get is a picture of the finished project in my head (I don't plan it that way, they just show up by themselves). Once the picture is there, they "dance" for me, around and around in my head until I've actually got the pattern done and the quilt completed. My favorite part of the whole process is to actually see a finished quilt in front of me that looks exactly the same as the picture that has been dancing in my head all that time.

What are your favorite techniques and why?

I LOVE paper piecing! By sewing the seams first, then cutting to size later, every single block or unit comes out exactly the same size, so putting everything together is a breeze. It also lets me do patterns that would be complicated and difficult to do in traditional piecing, but with paper it's just that simple sew on the lines. I

know people refer to it as "quilt-by-numbers", but it really works and is a terrific way to easily make some really unique pieces.

What is your "I can't work without it." sewing tool?

Believe it or not - a piece of photo paper!!! Paper piecing is so much quicker and easier if you use a folding card. By laying your card right on the paper with the edge even with where you want to fold, you can just fold your paper over the card and the fold is fast and totally straight. Heavy photo paper is just the best thing for folding cards, it's thin so you get a sharp crease and it doesn't break down or fray with use, so you can use the same card for many, many quilt projects.

What else would you like us to know about you?

I consider quilting to be my "real life" but I do have some other things to do with my days as well. I still work full time and have a small zoo at home made up of my collie "Henry", my 2 cats and my 2 little ferrets. Both my cats LOVE unfinished quilts - sometimes it's hard to get a piece completed since there is always some little furry creature sleeping on it. And nothing makes my ferrets happier than to help me fold patterns! It slows down the process for sure, but you can't help but laugh out loud at how much fun they have in a stack of paper. There's hardly ever a dull moment at my house!!



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