
Daily Embroidery Challenge: Stitch-a-Day Sampler with Rebecca Ringquist

Chapter 1 - Stitch-a-Day Sampler

Overview

- Hi, I'm Rebecca Ringquist, I'm an artist and an author, and the designer behind Dropcloth Samplers, a line of embroidery patterns that are sort of like coloring book pages for embroidery. This month, I'm gonna be walking you through a stitch-a-day, using the new sampler that I designed specifically for this class called drawing stitches sampler. Even if you've never embroidered before, this is a great chance to try your hand at it. Embroidery is really simple and we're gonna start the month off with some really simple stitches. You don't need very many materials, you just need fabric and a needle and thread. You can work on scraps of fabric, whatever fabric you like, or you can work on the sampler that's pre-printed and by the end of the month, you'll have it filled up and an excellent reference for your next embroidery projects. One of the best things about embroidery is the way that it is so meditative. I'm really looking forward to spending the month with everyone and taking some time out of the day to have a calm moment. (inspirational music)

Day 1: Running Stitch

- The first stitch we're gonna start with is a running stitch which is one of the easiest stitches in the world. But before we do that, I wanna show you how to get all your materials set up. Not everyone likes to use a hoop but I really like to use a hoop because it maintains the tension on the fabric and it keeps your hands from getting strain from holding the fabric in a particular way. All embroidery hoops have two pieces, there's usually a piece that has hardware on it. It might be a spring at the top but normally, most often there's a bolt and then there's a piece that goes underneath your fabric that's just a plain, wooden hoop, no hardware on it at all. So whether you're using the printed sampler or a scrap of fabric, you'll have your hoop separated into two pieces and you're gonna put the piece with no hardware underneath your fabric and figure out where you want it to go. You can see that this fabric is a little bit wrinkly and the hoop is gonna smooth out all wrinkles so it would be a bit of a waste of time to iron right now. So I'm gonna place the part of the hoop that has hardware on it over the top of the other part. I loosened this too much while I was talking before so I'm gonna tighten it a little bit more. Place it over the top and then really tighten the bolt. Once the bolt is tight, then you can sort of use your hands to stretch out the fabric even more and that will stretch out all the wrinkles. As you can see, I've placed the hoop over two pieces of fabric. So I have the printed embroidery sampler and then on the back, there's a piece of linen. A lot of times people ask how to attach one piece of fabric to the backing fabric and the answer that I always give is that I just embroider them together so you could base them together or you could use some kind of fusible web, especially fusible web, it makes it much more difficult to stitch through the cloth when you're doing the actual embroidery and embroidery will hold them together in the end and the hoop will hold it together while you're stitching. You can use the printed embroidery sampler. If you're not using that, you can use any type of fabric you like. I would still recommend backing your main fabric with something else. Any type of fabric will work but don't use anything that's stretchy, so it should be a woven fabric. This printed sampler is cotton. It's a nice quality clothing cotton and the backing fabric I'm using is linen but you could use another piece of clothing cotton or even an old sheet would work really well. Anything at all as long as it doesn't have any stretch in it. We're gonna start with the running stitch which is printed here. You can see some of the inspiration for this part of the

sampler here in my sketch book. I'm gonna pick out some threads now. So you can see I've pre-threaded a lot of needles. I love to have my needles pre-threaded, it's such a luxury that you can just sit down and embroider and you don't have to stop everything to thread needles. I'm gonna use pearl cotton for this first stitch. You could use lots of different threads but I'm gonna start with pearl cotton. This is size eight pearl cotton, pearl cotton comes in different sizes and the lower the number, the thicker the thread so size five pearl cotton is chunkier than size eight. There's also one thinner size than size 12. I like eight the best, it tends to cover the stitches on these printed samplers really well and it makes a really beautiful mark. It's a bit shinier than traditional embroidery floss which we'll use later in the month. I'm using these Milliners needles and I like them because they have a pretty straight shaft. Some needles bulge out at the top to make room for the eye of the needle and the Milliners needles are straight throughout. I really like this Gold Eye Clover brand needles simply because they're easy to thread. So once you get your thread through the eye of the needle, then that's where the choice comes in whether or not to tie the two threads together or to tie a knot at one end of the thread. So if you tie the two ends of thread together, your line will be twice as thick as it would be if you tied a knot only in one end of the thread. So I'm an artist, I always think of embroidery as being a lot like drawing and so you can make a thin mark or a thick mark. I'm gonna choose to make a thicker mark today and tie both of the threads together at the end to make a little knot. Sometimes, in traditional embroidery, people didn't make any knots and wove their ends in on the back and also in traditional embroidery, the back was meant to look as neat as the front. I don't buy into that so my backs often look really messy and I'm fine with that so feel free to knot or not knot. One final tool that I like to use is a rubber finger tip. So some people like to use thimbles, thimbles come in lots of different materials. The thing that I like to use the best are these rubber fingertips that you can get in an office supply store, they're latex they're really inexpensive and they still allow for your finger to move. They won't protect you if you jab your finger really sharply with a needle, it won't protect you but it keeps your finger from getting too sore and calloused from embroidering. So I like these a lot and I tend to just wear one on my right hand on my middle finger 'cause that's the hand I'm embroidering with. Obviously, if you're left-handed you would wear it on the other hand. So we can get started. I have a needle that's threaded with a knot at the end. And I'm gonna start here with this line of running stitches. Just a short line. So I'm gonna come up at the beginning of this first printed stitch. Bring my needle up and then go down again and that's the first stitch. Of course, in the first stitch I have a knot. One of the reasons that I really like pearl cotton versus embroidery floss is that it knots much less easily, it's harder to get a real tangle and that's because it's coded or mersorized. It's also a little bit shinier as a result which makes for a nice finish. So I'm just going up and down to create a dash line. If you're a quilter, you'll recognize this as the quilting stitch and actually one of my favorite ways to make quilts is using pearl cotton. I love that big thick mark on the quilt. It gets really beautiful. So I'm just going back in the other direction. The difference between the quilting stitch and the running stitch is not much, they're the same thing but embroidery is decorative and the quilting stitch is functional so it's holding the quilt together and with embroidery, we're just making a beautiful design on top of a piece of fabric. I'm gonna put my needle down one more time to show you the back. Here's the back side. You can see I've already done a bit of stitching on this sampler, the hoop and the banner. There's a little knot where we started. If you really like the way the knot works, of course, that could also be on the front. I think that could be a really cool design element. While I'm back here, I'm gonna show you how to knot of when you're finished with your stitches. So you can weave your threads in. I like to go under one stitch and then go under it again from that same direction and that

creates a little loop and then I go through that loop with my needle and that creates a knot. And I usually do that a couple of times just to make sure it's really secure. And then I can clip my threads and get going. If you are working on a plain piece of fabric and not this printed sampler, you can do the running stitch freestyle and do rows and rows of it, it looks really beautiful. That way, you can also draw a design on that you wanna follow. A great thing to use are these water erasable markers. There are a few different brands of them but they're always the same color blue and they wash out with water. A word to the wise though, if you iron this pen, it becomes permanent and really difficult to wash out. Same for if you leave it in a hot car, the heat will separate the ink and make it impossible to wash out so be careful using the water erasable pen. I love the running stitch because it's so easy and once you get going, you can get into a certain meditative space. It's hard to stop sometimes 'cause it's so simple and easy to do. You can see here, in this finished version of the same sampler that I've used lots of different colors including some variegated thread. This is Valdani Pearl Cotton which I really love, they're variegated versions of this. This is the same weight of thread at size eight pearl cotton there. You can see it, it shows up as a sort of double color 'cause the thread is tied together at the end. I also use running stitch a lot in my fine art practice and you can see here, it's a great example of lots of different types of thread and this is eyelash yarn that's normally used for knitting which becomes really textural and fun with the embroidered running stitch. Here's another example of just layers and layers of embroidery that are sort of holding a bunch of different pieces of fabric together and creating this beautiful texture. Here's another example in a piece found antique embroidery of this old ship that had a lot of embroidered running stitch in the background and they continued it into the other part of this composition to sort of draw all the elements together. Even though the running stitch is just a really simple dash line, you can use it in a couple of different ways. You can use it to make just a dash line to create text or a simple border around something or you can also use it as a way to create sort of an overall beautiful background texture which is probably the main way that I like to use it.

Day 2: Backstitch

- Yesterday we did a dashed line. Today we're gonna do a continuous line, otherwise known as a backstitch. You can see here on this sampler, all these rows of backstitch that are finished. I also outline the hoop in this sampler with backstitch and then I filled it in with another stitch which I'll fill you in on later. Here's a sampler that's not finished, and I'm gonna show you how to do the backstitch here on these straight line places. So you can see I've already filled in the hoop with backstitch on this example using variegated Pearl Cotton and plain color brown Pearl Cotton. So I'm gonna start here. I like working from right to left with the backstitch. You can also work from left to right. It really does not matter at all. So it starts out just the same as the running stitch, so I'm gonna do one line going forward. This is a variegated Pearl Cotton that I'm using, size eight purple. So then I skipped ahead one spot, and it looks just like I'm gonna do the running stitch but instead I'm gonna go back and fill it in. Kinda hold on to this end before I go. So there's the first bit of the backstitch, and I'm just gonna keep going. So you skip ahead and go back and fill it in. A question a lot of people ask are, am I going back into the same hole that I went down in before? And my answer is I'm not sure. I'm going in as close as I can to that spot so that it looks continuous. If it gets in that same exact spot, that's fine. If it's a little bit near it but not quite, that's fine too. There we go so that's one finished line. And now I'm gonna go up here and keep going to a new section. So say I'm embroidering with this purple and I wanna make one more area purple over here. I can just come up right over here. That creates about an inch of space on the back where my thread is skipping across

the fabric, and for something like this embroidery sampler, I know I'm not gonna wash it and I'm not gonna be wearing it or my fingers might catch on that big length of thread, that's fine. But if you're wearing, if you're making something that you're gonna wear you're gonna wanna knot off and then start again in the new location so that you didn't have such a big piece of thread hanging around the back. Oops I have a bit of a tangle back here. Just untangled it and I'm just gonna keep my finger there while I pull it through. So same as before, now I'm going from left to right just because of where my needle is on the fabric. So I went down a stitch, I skipped ahead, and now I'm going back to fill it in. Skip ahead again. And go back and fill it in. Skip ahead one more time, and go back and fill it in. My stitches are about 1/4 of an inch long. You can make them bigger or smaller. I'm doing straight stitches here. If you're using the backstitch around a curve, you wanna make your stitches really small. Otherwise the curve will look more angular, and a circle might end up looking more like an octagon. So keep that in mind when you're going around a circle or if you're doing text that has curves it, anything like that you'd probably wanna keep your stitches more on the small side. I'm gonna knot this length of backstitch off and then I'm gonna show you some other examples. Just like before, just gonna kinda weave underneath. And you could instead of tying a knot, you could continue weaving your threads sort of up the length of the stitch that you just created, which I did there. I'm also gonna create a little knot at the end of that just to make sure it's really secure. And as I'm pulling it tight, I just keep my finger there so I don't make the stitches on the front of the fabric, I don't wanna disturb the tension on the front of the cloth. So I'm just gonna tie another knot, and then trim it. You wanna keep your ends rather short. Otherwise you might have the tendency to pull them through when you do your subsequent stitches. And this is the finished version of the same sampler. I also have a bunch of examples of backstitch that I brought in. It's the stitch that I probably use the most in my artwork because it's a straight line. If you're making just about anything text or a drawing or anything at all, it's the most versatile stitch. So here is a little patch that I made just with my name. And this is a bit of found embroidery. I'm not sure what these little characters are. I think it's a little cocktail napkin with these strange, maybe they're martinis, I'm not sure. But I embroidered my name and where I used to live, and that's all backstitch, including that red sorta filigree. Here's an example of a wildflower that I transferred this pattern to a handkerchief and embroidered that with the backstitch. This is not Pearl Cotton. It's just regular sewing thread, which has sort of a dull finish that I sometimes really like for embroidery. Here's another one. This is mostly all backstitch with the exception of a few decorative French knots. This is a quilt label that I made. And then lastly I wanted to show you these two pieces. This is a sampler that's included in the back of the book that I wrote, and here's another example of just sort of a gradient. So like I said, I always think about embroidery as a way of drawing, and you can draw with a mechanical pencil or a big piece of charcoal or a large chunky crayon and make really different marks, and the same is true with embroidery. So this is a one strand of sewing thread all the way up to a double width knitting yarn. So I really like showing these variations or gradients, and I encourage you to play around with different materials and see what you have laying around. If you know someone who's a knitter that has scraps left over from a knitting project, it's not much for a knitter. They probably would even just throw it out, but a few yards of yarn is a lot for an embroiderer, so try to hook up with someone who has some good scraps laying around to experiment with some chunkier marks.

Day 3: Couching

- Today's stitch is couching. It uses two threads at once, so you'll have a thick thread underneath

that's being couched down with another needle and another thread, and even another color if you like, attaching it with thin parallel lines as you go. Here's an example on this in progress sampler. You can see this is orange thread that's been couched down with this beautiful variegated thread over the top. This thread is really cool. It changes in not only shade but color as you stitch along. So I really like that one and the way that it looks over the top of that thick orange. Here's another example with a yellow yarn couched down with a green Pearl Cotton. Gonna move this sampler out of the way and get my threads ready. So I'm using two different threads like I said today. This first one's actually a knitting yarn. I'm not sure what type of fiber it is, but it's nice and chunky. Could use anything at all. You could even use something that doesn't need to necessarily go through a needle like a pipe cleaner or raffia or hair or something like that. This we're gonna put through a needle. It does make for a more finished effect. So I've got that one threaded already, and the yarn would be nearly impossible to get through a milliner's needle or an embroidery needle, so I'm using a tapestry needle that has a bigger eye. And these are more challenging to embroider with because the eye is so big to be pulling back and forth through the fabric, but with couching, you're only gonna come up once at the very beginning and once at the very end, so it's no problem at all to use the tapestry needles. For the thread that's gonna be couching down my yarn, I'm using a milliner's needle again, and I'm using this Sulky thread that comes on a spool like this, sort of the equivalent of one or two strands of embroidery floss. So I've got that threaded in my milliner's needle, tied together at the end, and this is that really cool color changing thread. I'm still gonna use my rubber finger paper sorter because it keeps my hand from getting too sore. So with this yarn I'm gonna tie a knot at the end of this as well and then come up at the beginning of one of these lines that I want to couch down. Here's a printed one here. Again if you're using a scrap piece of fabric, you could use a blue marker to draw a design on your fabric first if you like. So I'm just gonna come up at the very beginning. Have to tug a little bit to get that yarn to come through this tightly woven fabric. Gonna tighten up my hoop just a little bit. It keeps getting loose. There we go. Now that I've pulled the thread through, I don't really need to interact with that needle anymore, so I can get my other needle ready. I've got this printed line here that I'm gonna follow. Using my left thumb since I'm right-handed, I'm gonna hold my needle in my right hand and I'm gonna use the left thumb to kinda pull that thread outta the way. And I'm gonna come up right on that line and then move that off to the other side and then go down over the top of that orange yarn and secure it with that stitch using my right hand to pull that needle through. Again I'm gonna come up on that printed line. And again, if you're working on scrap fabric, I do recommend drawing something to follow because it's nice to be able to have that line to follow so you can sorta snap the fabric right to that printed line. So coming up on the line here, moving the orange yarn off of the line, and then moving it off in the other direction going right back down. So you're sort of creating a framework for that orange line as you go. So I've just made one line over the top, one stitch line so to speak with this connecting variegated thread. You could also double it up, and that's what I did in that first sample. So once I've made one loop over the top, then I can go again to make that twice as thick. And there's the only reason to do that is decorative, which is the whole reason to do any embroidery is that it's decorative. So you might make three marks and then skip ahead and then three marks and then skip ahead or you could vary how many you make. It's really up to you. There are a lotta different threads to embroider with, and one of the things that I recommend not embroidering with is metallic thread or rayon thread because they tangle really easily and they can just be such a major headache. However if you're couching, you're not really going up and down through the fabric, so this orange thread here that's being couched down, this is yarn, would also be sort of a headache to

embroider with. But this would be a great opportunity to use something metallic or rough or even really smooth like rayon, those things are really frustrating to embroider with because they tend to knot up and tear and break. But they're great for couching, so you could couch down a metallic line with a really smooth and easy to work with cotton or Pearl Cotton or embroidery floss or something like that, and it's a great way to add a little bit of sparkle to the project that you're working on. Even if you're working on plain fabric, I highly recommend drawing a line on your cloth first because it's so nice to be able to know exactly where you want your needle to come up and to go down again. So as you're going up and coming down with the attaching needle, the yarn snaps right into place. You could also totally freehand it, but if you have a particular design in mind, I do recommend drawing it on first. I'm making these stitches about 1/4 of an inch apart. At this point, since this is a straight line, just a great aesthetic choice, but they could be farther apart or closer together. But just like with the backstitch if you're going around a curve, you'd want the stitches to be much closer together so that it looks curvilinear instead of angular. I wanted to address the issue of tension. So as you can see here, I've been sort of tugging on the orange thread as I go to keep it laying flat. However you could also not do that or even sort of tug in the opposite direction. You can see here, as I pull that down it creates a little bubble, and when I pull on it, it lies flat. But you could use an extra needle laying around and puff it out like that on purpose before you pull your other needle down, and that way it creates sort of an inchworm effect with couching too. So I like for this one I'm choosing to do it flat, but you could also make it loopy like that, and that would be a really cool textural effect as well. Similar to all the other stitches, you're just gonna bring your needle to the back and tie off one needle or one bit of thread at a time. So first I'm gonna tie off this connecting thread just by going through a nearby stitch. I'm gonna go through a couple times, and then go through that loop. I'll make two knots. This thread feels a little slippery, so I'm gonna be sure to do two. And I can cut that thread off. And then with the big thread, same thing, I'm gonna pull this down to the other side, make sure it looks nice and tidy on the front, flip it over, and I'm gonna weave this through. Make sure you're going just under thread and not through your fabric when you do this weaving bit. I'm gonna do the same thing, just make a little not like that. Ta-da. Let's look at some other examples of couching. Again I have some gradients here. This is a really thick acrylic yarn that wouldn't fit through any needle. So it's just couched down, and it's not knotted on the back. You can see all those blue connecting marks, but the orange is just floating there on the top. But it's really attached down with lots and lots of couching stitches so it'll be fine. I wouldn't recommend doing that for something that you're gonna wear, but for something that's just meant to hang on the wall, totally fine. So that's really thick all the way down to something really really thin. So this is a really thin bit of metallic embroidery thread that's just barely couched down. You can see it's couched down with green, but it's really hard to see because the green is the same tone as the background. Another cool thing you can do with couching is tying the thread together at the end to make a line that's twice as thick, but it also gives you a bit of flexibility. So this was a bit of thread that was two threads thick, and then I opened it up at one point and part of it went one way and part of it went another and then it came back together. So you can make these sort of tributaries that go apart and then come back together. Here's another example of a little sampler just on plain fabric that I whipped together. I think this was from an in-person workshop that I taught. And here's some more couching, just yarn that didn't go in a needle. And this yarn probably would've fit through a needle. It's tapestry, a tapestry would've totally accommodated this yarn but it's kind of nice to have these ends out, kinda splayed out, makes a nice design element. This is another example of couching with really thick Pearl Cotton attached down with another shade of

Pearl Cotton. And I wanted to show this to show how it looks if you have rows and rows of couching. So all the other examples are just one thin line of couching, but you can also use it right next to each other to make parallel rows of it, and it makes a really beautiful border. I think it would also be a really cool way to create text or to make an image appear on your fabric. Couching is a really great sort of thick line that you can use all different kinds of yarns and metallic threads or even things that don't necessarily fit through the needle to make a really bold mark on your fabric.

Day 4: Plain Chain

- Today's stitch is the plain chain stitch. It's a little more lively than the straight lines that we've been working on so far. And it sort of looks, especially if you make parallel rows of this chain stitch, it really can start to look like knitwear. The plain chain stitch is the building block for some fancier chain stitches that I'm gonna show you later this month. But I want to make sure that everyone's got a clear understanding of this plain chain stitch before we go on. And even on its own, the plain chain stitch is a really fun way to make a lively line on your fabric. So, let's get started. Got my fabric already in the hoop. To begin, make one little tacking mark. So I'm gonna come up and down, just like the beginning of the running stitch, just like the beginning of the back stitch. So now I've got one teeny tiny little mark there. I'm using size eight pearl cotton, tied together at the end to make a double thickness of the thread. Now you can see on this drawn on sampler, there're these little links in the chains. So, when I come up again, I'm gonna come up at the bottom of this link, but from underneath my fabric. So I'm gonna come up here with my needle. Now my thread is all the way up, and I'm gonna go underneath that mark that I just made. I'm gonna, kind of swim underneath it, I'm not going through the fabric, I'm just going underneath that mark. So, and then I'm gonna pull it all the way through, being aware of tension. So you don't wanna pull it really hard, 'cause instead of having a nice chain shape, you'll have just a straight line. So, be gentle with your thread. Pull it, sort of coax it into just the shape you want, and then I'm gonna go down again, next to, or in the same spot that you came up earlier. And that creates the first chain, so the first link in your chain. So now I'm gonna go down again to the bottom of the next link in the chain. And now, instead of going through that first bit of thread, I'm gonna go through the previous link in the chain. And again, pull it through, nice and gently, and then go down again there. I'm gonna come up here, again, and just keep going. Each link here in the chain stitch is attached to the previous link. When you're finished with the chain stitch, you'll just knot off on the back as you would with any other stitch. And if you wanted to change colors, say you're going along in this yellow, and you decide that you wanna switch to red, or any other color, or another type of thread even, you can just knot off on the back, and then come up with another color thread and attach it to what you've already got going. So, I come up down here at the bottom of this link, and I'm gonna come through the previous link in the chain, to attach the new one. So, again I'm just running my needle underneath this link. I'm not puncturing the fabric at all. Just sort of going under the bridge. So you can see how my needle moves up and down, I can tell that I haven't grabbed any fabric accidentally. And I pull that thread all the way though, gently. If you pull it tightly, instead of having a nice link, you'll have just a flat glob of threads. So you wanna make sure that you are really paying attention to tension with this stitch. Let's do another one. Come up at the bottom of this link, go through here, making sure that you haven't grabbed any threads, pull it all the way out, back down again. And just like the other stitches that we've been doing this week, you wanna make sure that you're, especially as you're going around curves, that your stitches aren't too big, in order to create a nice, curved shape. Unless you want something that doesn't look curved, and then, knock yourself out. All right, coming

up on the last link in this line. There. So there's one finished line of the plain chain stitch. Let's look at some more examples. Here is a sample of chain stitch in a few different colors. And, like I said before, I just finished off in one color, and picked up with a new one as I went along. Just a stitched alphabet. Really like the way that one looks. I think the chain stitch is a great way to make text look really cool. This is a place mat. I used chain stitch to make some concentric circles around the printed pattern that was already on this cloth. Sort of a combination of couching, chain stitch, and back stitch. But I really love the way these chain stitched petals look. And lastly, I wanted to show this one. This is a sort of, work in progress. I been filling in this text with chain stitch, a totally different approach to chain stitch text than this guy. I'm using parallel lines of chain stitch to fill in these huge letters in my initials. And I really love the way it starts to look like a knit garment, or a knit pattern. I really love how you can use chain stitch to make a beautiful single line, or you can use it in parallel lines to build up a beautiful, rich texture.

Day 5: Seed Stitch and Dot Stitch

- Today we're gonna do two stitches: the seed stitch and the dot stitch. They're practically the same stitch. We're gonna use embroidery floss which we haven't used yet this month, so I wanted to talk a little bit about how to use embroidery floss, because unlike pearl cotton that you can use straight off the spool, embroidery floss takes a little bit of prep work. Most of the embroidery floss that you find, the most common packaging looks a lot like this. This is a generic brand, but you can also find most commonly DMC floss and Anchor. Those are two different brands that are probably the most widely available. If you're using something that you're gonna wash a lot, I really recommend DMC floss because it's the most colorfast. Even the reds won't run if you get them wet. So for a garment or something like that, I think DMC is sort of the gold standard. However, there are a lot of really beautiful hand-dyed threads that you can find if you look around and needle-work stores, especially stores that specialize in needlepoint, often have a lot of really beautiful hand-dyed threads from smaller companies. And one of my favorite small thread companies is called Weeks Dye Works. They're based in North Carolina and they make a wide range of embroidery threads, as well as quilting threads and hand-sewing threads. So this is their embroidery floss, and they have actually, two different types. They sell embroidery floss like this, which is often referred to as six-strand floss, so if you get DMC or Anchor, or another brand, this is sort of the most standard type of embroidery floss. If you're going to a store and say, "I need thread for embroidery." Someone will most likely direct you to the six-strand floss. Weeks Dye Works makes this, but they also make a two-strand floss, so this is really handy to sew with. When you're embroidering, you almost never use all six strands at once, because it would be very difficult to get through the needle, and difficult to pull through your fabric. So if you're using a six strand floss, you first need to separate it. And I'm gonna show you how to do with this. This is a color changing or variegated thread. I'm gonna rip the packaging, make it easier to take it apart. You can separate it out like this, and so it's in a ring, and pull out however much you want. I wouldn't pull much more than a yard. And cut just that length. And now you've got about a yard, and what I do to separate the strands, is sort of fray them out, splay the threads out at the end. So now, I'm gonna count and you can separate it into six different pieces or three groups of two. I'm gonna separate it into two groups of three. So I've got three over here and three over here, and then I'm just gonna slowly pull them apart. And the way that works best for me is to sort of separate them with my left hand while my right hand is sort of holding the tension and I grab the middle with my right pinky, and just go slow. If you go too quickly you might get a knot. So you just wanna be really gentle with the tension. So now I've got two identical piles.

I've got three strands here and three strands here, and I can put those through my needle. So a good question that people often ask when I'm talking about separating threads is: why not just use six strands at once and tie a knot at one end? So if I put this thread that's now three strands wide, if I put that through the needle and tie the ends together, then I'll be sewing with a line that's six threads wide. So the reason you don't wanna put six strands through your needle and just tie a knot at one end, which in the end would give you the same look of thread, is because where the thread goes through the needle, you'll have a chunk of thread that's 12 threads thick, and that would make really big holes in your fabric, and it would really mess up the tension and be very difficult to pull through your cloth. So, it's a good idea to always separate the threads and even if you're gonna tie them together again at the end, it'll make your stitching so much more pleasant. And it seems like a pain to have to separate them and it is, and I it makes me often wonder why more companies don't sell two-strand floss or three-strand floss, and in fact Weeks Dye Work, as I mentioned, they do sell this two-strand floss. It's much more expensive but it comes on this little spool and it's so much easier to work with, because you don't have to stop and separate your threads first. So a more limited color palette, but they're these really beautiful, just slightly variegated solids, which I love. Okay, so today we're gonna do the seed stitch and the dot stitch. You can see even just looking at the drawing that they're almost identical. So the seed stitch is just one little line, and the dot stitch is two parallel lines, and they are sort of scatter shot so, imagine taking the running stitch and scrambling it, and you'll have an idea of what the seed stitch or the dot stitch looks like. Confetti. Okay so another stitch like the running stitch that's dead easy, so the seed stitch I'm just gonna come up from underneath, and go back down, and that's one little seed stitch. Come up again, go back down, and one little seed stitch is sort of dull, but where the seed stitch really starts to look amazing is if you cover a big area in it, and you can make a really incredible background texture. Be a great way to stitch snow or a garden covered in seeds. Waiting for this thread to change colors. This is that variegated thread that we just separated. I'm gonna kinda work my way over to the part of the sampler that's labeled for the dot stitch, so that I can show you how to do that one. Virtually the same, it's just two little parallel lines. Okay, so now I'm on the dot stitch area, and I've got these two parallel lines so, I'm just gonna cover them. Cover one, and then another one right next to it. Just like that. One. To tie the stitch off it's just like all the other stitches. It's kind of fun to look at the back. So I'm just gonna go under what I just stitched. And you could either weave back and forth through, or tie a little knot. I'll tie a little knot on this one. Do it once. Let's do it again just to make sure it's really secure. There. There we go. And when I'm finished stitching, I like to tie a knot in the thread, if there's any left, so that it's ready to go the next time I'm ready to sit down and stitch. Let's look at some other examples of the dot stitch and the seed stitch. Got a finished version of the sampler over here. Lots of tiny little seed stitches and dot stitches. It's just such a small variation, one stitch verses two, but it makes a big different in how they look. I think the dot stitch looks a little bit more three dimensional. Here are a couple examples of how I've used it in these little art works. I think it's a great way to make something pop off the page, so I have these images of ducks and birds that I've embroidered and I'm just using the seed stitch to fill in around them and it makes them sort of pop off the page. It's sort of similar to a way that an artist might use cross hatching in a drawing or an etching. Here's another example of the seed stitch filling in around these reverse applique areas. Looking back to my sketchbooks which are sort of the inspiration for this sampler, and month of workshops. I just wanted to show this little area. These are tiny little dots but, it's similar to the effect that you can get with the seed stitch. And I was making mine about a quarter of an inch long. You can make them even smaller, and make tiny, tiny little marks that were more akin

to these dots. So, it's a great opportunity to experiment. I encourage you to use really thin threads. Try it with the thicker thread, see which one you like working with the most. The seed stitch and the dot stitch are both a really great way to make and all over really cool background pattern.

Day 6: Chessboard

- Today's stitch is another sort of confetti stitch. It's called the chessboard, and it's a satin stitch combined with an X over the top. So it makes a really cool overall repeating pattern, and I can't wait to show you how it works. Let me show you an example of the finished version of the chessboard before we get started. So here you can see I used yellow in the background to make a satin stitch, and then I did a variegated purple over the top to make a little X to hold it all down. In this example, there's a pink, satin stitch with a yellow X over the top. It's a nice idea to use a contrasting color for the X over top of the satin stitch bit to make sure that the X really pops off the background. I need to move my hoop from where it's been the last few days to make room for the chessboard. Those are in a different part of the hoop. Take the outer ring off like you did at the very beginning, and move the bottom piece. I always like to do this on a flat surface, like this table is perfect, to keep everything neat and tidy, especially because this sampler is not attached to the background fabric. Or if you're using a piece of plain fabric you just want to make sure that you don't have too many lumps and bumps between where you were working and where you are working next. So I'm just going to kind of slide the hoop over in that direction, and then secure the outer ring over the top. And then the same as before, I'm going to go around and give a tug all the way around the hoop to make sure that I have pretty nice even tension. Since there's a backing piece of fabric, I often do that on the back as well, just pull the back fabric. You can see there's a little bit of a wrinkle there, and you don't want to stitch the wrinkle into place, so I'm just going to pull that until most of the wrinkles are out. There we go. Sometimes the direction you think you have to pull is not the direction that you actually have to pull from. It's a bit of a riddle. So that looks pretty good. There we go. So now I'm going to get started. For this chessboard, for the satin stitch I find that it's a nice idea to use this embroidery floss because it lays flatter than the pearl cotton. The pearl cotton's a little bit shiny and it's a twisted thread, so it sticks up a little bit more. And especially for the satin stitch background of the chessboard, I want it to be a really flat effect. So the satin stitch, we haven't talked about this yet. We're just going to come up, make one stitch. Like all the stitches we've done this month, the chessboard satin stitch starts out looking a lot like the running stitch. But here's where it gets interesting. We're going to make another stitch right next to that first one, parallel to it, and touching it. There's the second one. And I'm just going to keep going in that manner all the way across until I've filled in that whole area. You can see now I've stitched enough so that it's a bit of a square. I'm going to keep going because, as this one is printed, it's a rectangle. But you could also use more of a square shape. I'll show you an example of that when I'm finished with this guy. I think the squares look really great and are more true to the chessboard reference. Do one more. Okay, going to flip it over. And to knot this one off, I'm just going to go under all those stitches I just made. And then skip ahead one little bit and go back through a different collection of those lines. I'm just gonna do that back and forth a couple times to bury the threads, and don't really need to knot after doing that because they're pretty well contained. So the next part I'm going to do is to do an X over the top. And I picked out this green thread which will be a nice contrast to the hot pink satin stitch. And I'm going to stitch one big X right over the top. So that's going that way, and I'm going to do another one going the other way corner-to-corner. And the last little step to make sure everything looks nice and neat and tidy is to come up in the very

center and go down right over the center of the X, right at the point where the two lines intersect. And that just secures everything and it keeps the X from getting wobbly as your sampler keeps going. Let's look at another example of some chessboard stitches. I have a little sampler here that I made on a plain piece of found fabric. This is a section from an unfinished sampler that I found at a thrift store, or something. I made a collection of these chessboard stitches. You can see these are all squares, and I worked them in lots of different colors with different color X's over the top. With this stitch, you can do the background or the satin stitch portion first, and then come back days, or even weeks, later and do the X's. So it's a fun way to play with color in a more slow, considered way.

Day 7: Ermine Filling

- In my sketchbooks, one of the marks that I make the most are these little asterisks, and they're a great way to sort of fill the space, they look like stars or snowflakes or confetti. So when I was researching this sampler I spent a lot of time looking through old embroidery books, old embroidery direction books, and I found a stitch that looks almost exactly like that and it's called the er-man stitch or er-mine, and I'm not sure how you pronounce that, and I'm gonna show you how to do that one today. Here is an example of that stitch, I stitched it in these little tiny red marks with this red thread, I should say, and it's stitched on top of a piece of vintage embroidery, these embroidered satin stitch flowers. But this is the ermine stitch that I want to show you how to do today, that looks just like a little drawn asterisk. I'm using embroidery floss, so this is three strands that I've tied a knot just at one end. Yesterday we were using them tied together, today I just have a knot at one end. So you can see I have a short end of thread and a longer end, and the knot is at the longer end. So my stitched line is gonna be half as thick as it was yesterday and that's just an aesthetic choice, yours can be thicker. I think for these tiny little marks it looks nice to have a thin line. I spun the sampler around because it's easier for me to hold the sampler in that direction, and here you can see where it says ermine filling, that's where I'm gonna start to fill in. So I'm gonna do an X and then a line down the center. It's sort of like a reinforced cross stitch. Oops. I love that sound of the thread going through the fabric. There's something really great about it. It's quiet. So I made the X, and now I'm gonna make another one that just goes right through the center. So there's one little ermine stitch, and now I'm gonna make another one. I probably say this about every stitch, but I think this one would also look really great with variegated thread. You can see as I'm stitching here the way that the ermine stitch is drawn on this sampler is really small, so if I was using a thicker thread the pattern of that star shape would get lost really quickly. But you could use a thicker thread, you'd just need to scale up the size of them. So instead of being maybe a quarter of an inch, if you're using a thicker thread they might be an inch or an inch and a half, you could make them really big. I can imagine doing this in a heavy yarn on burlap, for example, and it looking really fabulous. But for this small scale I recommend using a thinner thread. So that one I didn't make that cross quite long enough so I'm gonna go back and sort of fake it out and make an extra leg over there and no one will know, no one will be the wiser. Ta da, it never happened. That's the type of thing that you would have gotten dinged for in a home ec class 50 years ago. Not in my class, just keep going. Oop, you can see there's a blue thread, it's probably something from the backing fabric that's coming through there. Let's see if I can remove it from the back side, where is that coming from? Did I get it? Yes. When you're done with your last ermine stitch or if you just want to change colors, just knot it off the same way we did all the other stitches.

Day 8: Cross Filling

- Today's stitch is the cross-stitch. It's another really easy stitch. It's one that is often associated with counted cross-stitch, which is a really precise method of embroidery that uses the threads on the fabric to count out how a design is gonna be arranged on a piece of fabric. And the way we're using cross-stitch is sort of the opposite of that, using it as a way to decorate the background of a fabric in more of a scattershot way. So this is another stitch that was inspired by marks that I like to make in my sketchbook. You can see here, I've filled in around this blank contour drawing of a squirrel. Filling in the background with these Xs kinda made the squirrel pop off the page. So that X translates really easily into an X on the fabric, and it's so similar to the ermine stitch. It's actually just a stripped-down, even easier version of the ermine stitch. So I'm gonna use a green pearl cotton. Turn this around, so it's easier to grab my sampler. Sometimes I like to just sort of roll the background fabric up onto the sampler, so that those threads don't get in the way. So it's just a little X. And if you're familiar with traditional cross-stitch, this might make you a little uncomfortable. Because traditional cross-stitch, you make all your stitches that go this way first, and then you come back and cross them in the other direction, and here, we're working in bit of a more haphazard way. But just keep going, go with it. You'll feel comfortable soon. Just gonna make another one here. Make one part of the X, and then make the other part that crosses over it. (thread gliding) These Xs are pretty tiny and well-suited to the gauge of thread that I'm using. I wanna also show you some other examples where I used a bigger thread. Here's an example of three different sizes of cross-stitch all in the same colorway. So this one is stitched in this cotton tapestry thread that DMC makes. It's a really nice, twisted thread that makes a rather thick mark. I like it 'cause it's not mercerized, so it's kind of a dull finish. And these two were both stitched with pearl cotton, but at different scales. So you can see these Xs are much bigger and farther apart than the ones over here. The reason that these are all so even and really linear, they look like they were stitched in a graph pattern, it's 'cause I used this product called waste canvas, which allows you to stitch over an existing grid, and then when you're finished stitching it, you pull the grid out from behind it, so you can make a really even gridded pattern, even on a regular piece of woven cotton. I have one more example here of a piece that was stitched on another bit of found embroidery. And I've used the cross stitching in a little bit of a more improvisational way. So there's some tiny ones, and bigger ones, and I kind of playing with scale as I go to create volume and interesting texture.

Day 9: Fly Filling

- Today's stitch is called fly filling. It's really easy; you're gonna love it. It looks sort of like little sprouts or little birds flying through space. You can use two colors, or you can use one color. I'm gonna show the stitch using two colors 'cause it'll be a good contrast and pick up pretty well on the camera. We're gonna start by making these little bar stitches that are going to contain the fly part of what we're gonna make this stitch out of. So it's gonna start out looking a lot like the running stitch, just like a lot of the stitches that we've made so far. I'm just gonna make a little tack mark there. It's sort of like the beginning of a chain stitch. And I'm gonna make a few of these so I can show you how to fill them in in a moment. All right, there's one more up here. Then I'm gonna knot off the green and come back with another color to fill in these little fly filling stitches. Now I'm gonna fill in these fly filling stitches with embroidery floss. This is three strands tied together to make a total of six. And I'm gonna come up just at the end of the V. And then I'm gonna go under that little tack mark that I made. I'm not going through the fabric. I'm just going under the tack mark, under the bridge. Try not to separate the threads at all. And then I'm gonna go back down at the other end of that V. And that makes one little fly stitch. And then we'll do another one. This is a

variegated thread, so hopefully we'll get some pink ones. Just like the chain stitch, you wanna be really aware of your tension and don't pull too hard. You don't want everything to get out of whack. Go up here and get this one, maybe we can... Aha, there's the pink that I've been waiting for. It's exciting when the new color pops onto the front of the fabric. I love that moment. This would be a great time to use a thicker thread as well. You could use that cotton tapestry thread that I was talking about earlier. You could use a bigger gauge of pearl cotton, like size five pearl cotton. You could even use knitting yarn or a crochet cotton. Something like that would work really well here. Even a metallic, 'cause you're only coming up once and then down once. It's almost like a weaving stitch in that way. One. Two. There we go. You'll knot your threads off in the same way on the back. I have another little hoop to show you some fly filling stitches here. You can see I've gotten this hoop ready to stitch by making lots and lots of little tack marks. This is a little in-progress sampler. And here I made some of them so the fly is a more acute angle and more or less acute. So I like these where the V is closer together so it sort of looks like a flock of flying birds or something like that. I encourage you to try different angles, different colors and weights of threads, and use this to experiment and make a cool background pattern.

Day 10: Wheat Ear

- In the work that I do in my own art practice, I use a lot of found embroidery, things that I find at rummage sales and thrift stores and in the backs of closets. I made a lot of the samples for this class on things like that, including this strange little napkin that had the word lipstick embroidered on it which I've had forever. And I actually used to have a little collection of these. I'm not sure, hopefully someone will leave in the comments that knows what these things were intended for. As far as I know, they were meant to be a place to dab your lipstick, but it seems odd to me to make something that's so beautifully embroidered just to stain it with your own lipstick. Anyhow, that's what I used to stitch the example for today's stitch, which is called the wheat ear, and it's a variation on the chain stitch. So we're moving into the fancy chain stitch section of our month together. I've got a variegated pink pearl cotton, and I'm gonna just turn my sampler this way. It's basically the plain chain stitch, but instead of having a tack mark at the beginning, you have a V at the beginning. So I'm gonna start here at the top of this V. Make one half of the V. I'm gonna come back up to the other top of the V. There we go, now I have a full V. Now I'm gonna come down to the bottom of the first link in this chain. Need to tighten up my hoop's tension just a little bit. And I'm gonna go under that first V. Gonna pull my thread all the way through. Then I go down in that spot that I came out of. And now instead of going right to the next link and attaching it to that last link, I'm gonna make another V. And now I'll attach the next link. And instead of going just through the V, I'm gonna go through the V and also under the previous link. Like that. Now make another V. And it just goes on and on like that. If you wanted to switch colors in the middle and segue into a new color, you'd just knot off on the back, come up, and attach the new thread and the new color to what you had previously. So under the V and also under that link. This stitch is a great way to make botanical imagery. I also think it would make an incredibly lush border. Maybe a caterpillar. I can't wait to see what everybody transforms this stitch into.

Day 11: Powdered Filling

- Today's stitch is powdered filling and it's basically a disconnected chain stitch. So, before when we did the chain stitch, each link in the chain was attached to the one before it and here they're just scatter shot across the surface. So, sort of getting back to the confetti stitches that we did a few

days ago. This is another way to make these sort of seed shapes on your fabric. I'm gonna use pearl cotton again. I've got a nice bright yellow and I'm gonna make, it's just exactly like the very beginning part of the chain stitch. So, make one little tack mark. Then I'm gonna go back and fill it in. If you know you're gonna make a whole bunch of these, you could make all the tack marks first and then go back and fill them in. So, for example, you could also make the tack marks in one color and then fill the powdered filling stitches in in another color, so that's a fun way to build contrast. So I'm gonna do these yellow guys. And then on that off and show you how to fill it in with another color. But you could also do it all in one color. That would be cool too. I'm gonna flip it over and knot my yellow thread on the back. Then I'll go back in with another color to fill in these little powder filling stitches. Set that aside and I have a pink thread here. So I'm gonna come up from underneath and then go right under that little tack mark to create that first little seed shape. It's a lot like the fly filling stitch. It's just the second part is different, but the first part, as you can see, is exactly the same. I love this bright fuchsia thread. This is pearl cotton by the way. Oop, I pulled that one a little bit tight so I'm gonna just kinda ease back on the tension there so it maintains that nice seed shape. Here we go. I'll go back through. Okay, I've got a few more to fill in. I'm just gonna fill the rest in with all pink. So, just as if I were doing a regular chain stitch. So, make a tack mark and then immediately I'm gonna go back and fill it in with the same color. I have a sample that I made on a plain piece of fabric that I wanna show you here, so you can see I made a whole bunch of these little tack marks in a few different colors of thread and then I've been filling it back in with different variegated pearl cottons, green, red, purple, and it really starts to look like a flower garden.

Day 12: Zigzag Chain

- Today's stitch is the zigzag chain stitch and this is one that I really struggled with, all the directions that I was reading in my collection of embroidery books showed how to do it one way, which I did here, I was really following the directions and trying to get it just right and I found that when I stitch it this way, the links in the chain were collapsing in on themselves and it was really hard to get a nice, defined zigzag shape, which I really wanted to create, I love rickrack and I love a proper zigzag, so I came up with a new way to do it which I'm gonna show you next and that's how I did it here and that's how I'm gonna show you how to do it. So what I'm gonna do is, you can see where the top of each of the zigzags or the top of each of the Vs, I'm gonna go through and make a little tack mark, so I'm gonna make a little tack mark here, and before I go onto the next one, I'm gonna fill in the first two links in this zigzag chain, so I'm gonna come down to the bottom here, make the first chain. And then I'll make the same one on the other side going through that same tack bar. You can use your needle to kind of, I like to use the back of my needle to make sure everything's laying nice and straight, so that looks good and now I just go onto the next one, so I'm gonna make another little tack mark. And come down here. Same thing. And go through that little spot. And back down here. Being really careful with your attention, you want them to stay nice and open. Later we'll do this arrowhead stitch, which is just a straight zigzag, but here you really wanna highlight the chain part of the zigzag chain. And that time I pulled it a little tightly, so I'll just use the back of my needle to kind of coax it back out into shape. Here we go, now I'm gonna make a little tack mark. And we've done a lot of stitches that have these little connecting tack bars in the last few days, and same as before, you could do the tack marks all the way across in one color and then come back in and fill in the zigzag chain part. I'm doing it all in one color here but it'd be a great opportunity to use another color as a little accent. This is sort of a fussy stitch, there's nothing fast about it, you have to kinda get in the zone to do it, so I think it would make a great border. It'd be a

beautiful way to frame something. Definitely wanna take your time and make sure that you're capturing the roundness of each link. I wanted to get back to this original sample that I showed at the beginning and talk a little bit about thread choice, so on the sampler I was using pearl cotton, my favorite size, eight pearl cotton, and that's how I did these first two examples on this red cloth but this one up here is actually stitched with a wool sock weight knitting yarn, which I think looks really great. I like the way that heavy wool thread makes a softer zigzag shape.

Day 13: Backstitched Chain

- Today's stitch is the backstitched chain, which is a combination of two stitches that you already know, the backstitch and the chain stitch. It's a stitch that you can do on top of any existing chain stitch. It could be something that you've already stitched, or you could also use a found chain stitch that you find on an embroidery at the thrift store or something like that. So it's kind of fun to layer up some of the stitches and the ideas that we've already been working with earlier this month. Here are some examples. This one is stitched in a thick orange cotton tapestry thread from DMC. And then I did a purple backstitch over the top in pearl cotton. This one's all pearl cotton, the yellow chain stitch with a red backstitch right over the top. I have a bit of chain stitch already stitched on my sampler here and I'm gonna go over the top of it now with a back stitch in a contrasting color so you'll be able to see it. I really recommend using a contrasting color for this stitch because, otherwise, it sort of gets lost without the contrast in the color to make it pop off. You hardly notice the backstitch so it's a wasted effort. I'm gonna start from this end and I'm just gonna do a backstitch. So gonna just cut right through the center of this chain stitch. So make one stitch going forward and then I come up again in the middle of that chain stitch and go back to fill it in. Then I'm gonna make another one. And go back and fill it in. This chain is about a quarter of an inch per link and so I'll probably get about two stitches, two backstitched stitches per link, give or take. You can see the way I'm stitching these, it's sort of unintentionally coming out that there's a short stitch and a long stitch. And I'm just sort of noticing that, I didn't do it on purpose and I really like the way that looks so I'm gonna try to repeat that pattern as I go along. Of course, if you wanted to have your stitches really even and have them all the same length, that would be great too. You're not trying to hold anything together with this stitch, it's all decorative so you can make long stitches or short stitches or long, short, long, short. It's really up to you. One of the things that I like best about this stitch is that it looks really complicated if you see this and you don't know how to embroider and you don't know about the backstitch chain, you might think this is a really complicated stitch, but it's actually super easy. It's just two of the easiest stitches in the book combined.

Day 14: Heavy Chain

- Today's stitch is the heavy chain stitch and it's one that I had tried to figure out on my own for a long time and couldn't get and then last summer, I was hanging out with my friend Annabel Rigley, another Creative Bug teacher and she finally showed me how to do it and it was such a revelation actually, pretty easy. Here's an example of this heavy chain stitch. Here it's stitched in this beautiful hand-dyed, thick pearl cotton. So, that's how you get this really modeled look and here it is in some other, lighter weight pearl cottons. As the name implies, it's a really heavy, thick line. I wanna bring you back to my sketch book and show, not an illustration of the heavy chain stitch, 'cause it's actually one that's difficult to illustrate, but rather how I might use it in my fine art practice to translate an image in my sketch book into an embroidered or stitched image. And I think these concentric circles that I've drawn here would look really incredible with this heavy chain stitch. It

might also be a really cool way to outline a bold image like this bird. I think I'm gonna use this size eight blue pearl cotton and I'm gonna start up here at the end. So, this heavy chain stitch starts just like any old chain stitch with one little tack mark at the beginning. And the next step is the same. Gonna make, go down a bit. Little bit shorter than your average chain stitch and you're gonna go through that knot. So far it looks exactly like the same old chain stitch. And now, here's where it starts to get interesting and different from the plain chain stitch. Normally you'd go back through this first link that you made but instead, I'm gonna go back through that same tack mark that I made at the very beginning for that stitch. And when I come back the next time, I'm gonna go back through that first chain stitch, if that makes sense. So, I'm gonna come down now, my thread has a little weird loop in it. I'm gonna pull the darker part I think to make that come through. There it goes. So, I'm gonna tack back down here, but before I do I'm gonna make a mental note of where I'm gonna come back next time. So, the next time I come back through the loops, I'm gonna come back about right there. So you wanna just kind of mentally remember where that's gonna be because it can be hard to locate that spot. Whoop, my thread keeps getting misaligned. Okay, so now I'm gonna drop back down a little bit more and now this time I'm gonna come back right about there. And the next time before I pull this all the way through, I'm gonna come back through there. It helps me to sort of map out where I'm gonna go before I close the loop. So this time I'm bringing my thread down here and when I come back again, I'm gonna go through right there. Whoops. Great thing about this pearl cotton is that when it tangles up like that it rarely results in a knot that you have to cut out. You can almost always coax it out of its knotted state. I love that. So I'm going down here. When I come up again to weave back through, I'm gonna go right about there. I try to remind myself of that when I'm working on this because I'm so used to doing the plain or original chain stitch, that sometimes I forget what I'm doing and, sort of, space out and stop doing the heavy chain stitch and it just turns into a regular chain, which is a bummer 'cause there's not really a way to go back and fix it without tearing your stitches out. So, it's good to just give yourself a little reminder. Pay attention. This heavy chain stitch is a great way to make a meandering line. It would make a really cool border. It would also make an incredible text. It would take forever, but it would look really cool.

Day 15: Fern Stitch

- Our next stitch is a fern stitch and it is a variation of a zigzag and it's one that I have found myself using a lot in my sketch books, it's a really fun and easy way to make sort of a tree shape or a vine shape. I have a few examples to show you here. These guys that I drew over the top of these tree shapes are exactly what the fern stitch looks like, so it's this straight line with these little branches coming off of it and it's actually just sort of a variation on the back stitch. Here in this other sketch book you can see I have a really large version of it, so this is sort of a blown-up cartoon way of illustrating the fern stitch but it's the same shape so I wanted to point that out to you before we start stitching. Lastly before we start, I'm gonna show you what it looks like when it's finished, so here's some fern stitch that I stitched up on this little bit of found embroidery. Not quite sure what this is, it's a beautiful little doily, it's probably meant for that arm on the chair or something, but I stitched a bunch of these little fern patterns over the top. All right I've got a nice yellow threaded up. This is Valdani size eight pearl cotton. Sound like a broken record but it is my favorite, and I'm gonna start at the top of this fern stitch and just make one stitch down to here. Starts out looking a lot like the running stitch and a lot like the backstitch and it is a backstitch, it's just sort of a meandering backstitch. So now I'm gonna do this arm, come back to that same spot, go back down

again. Go here, come back in. And I just continue on like that. Instead of stitching this fern stitch all in a straight line, you could separate them out and make little sections of them. I can imagine it being a really cool little bird footprint or a little weed. As a line like this, it makes a really amazing border. It would make a really great way to illustrate a garden or a wild thicket. Keep working on this fern stitch. It can go on as long as you want it to, just nod off on the back, you can change colors just like any of the other stitches. Before I go, I wanted to show you a few more examples. These are all Dropcloth Sampler designs that are part of the color verse series that I designed a couple years ago and you can see here how the fern stitch is lined up in these sort of parallel arcs and it sort of looks like seaweed. My mom stitched this example of beautiful green theme. Here is another one, the straight lines of fern stitch and they go in opposite directions so some of them are going up and then the next one goes down. It's another example of that same sampler, just stitched in a slightly different color way. And lastly, here's another one, this is the seed sampler from Dropcloth Samplers and the fern stitch is used here to create these lozenge shapes and to really fill out the shape of each individual seed.

Day 16: Arrowhead Stitch

- Today we're doing the arrowhead stitch, which is a true zigzag. And as somebody just pointed out, it looks a lot like a machine stitch zigzag. Here's a little sampler I made to show off the arrowhead stitch. And it does look a lot like sewing machine stitches. And just like on the sewing machine, you can adjust the stitch length and the stitch width. You can when you're hand sewing as well. So you can see here, some of the angles are more acute or more obtuse, and I used a few different colors of thread to make tighter or looser zigzags for this arrowhead stitch. I'm gonna show you how to do it here on this printed sampler. And got a nice bright green pearl cotton picked out already. This is just a backstitch, a lot like the fern stitch before it. So I'm just gonna go up and down with the thread. It's exactly the same as the backstitch. Instead of a straight line, it's a zigzag line. I don't think I mentioned this before in the days that we've been together, but the way that I organize this class and the way that I organize the sampler is by these sort of loose groups of stitches, some of which are existing things, like fancy chain stitches. You can find those in another embroidery book that you might look at. And some of them I sort of made up, like this is a collection of zigzag stitches and the confetti stitches that we did before. So this is a sort of perfect example of the zigzag collection, and it's the most obvious zigzag stitch, which in some books is referred to as the arrowhead stitch. You'll find if you're looking through old embroidery books and new embroidery books that sometimes the same stitch will be called different things depending on what book you look at. Historically, the purpose of a sampler is a place to learn new stitches and a place to collect new stitches so that you can look back at it when you're starting a new project. So, I wouldn't worry too much about making the sampler perfect, but rather thinking of it as a learning tool and a future reference.

Day 17: Buttonhole (Closed)

- The next stitch I want to show you in the zigzag collection is the closed buttonhole stitch or the closet blanket stitch. Blanket stitch and buttonhole are used interchangeably. To me, really the same thing. So this one is the closed buttonhole. It's a collection of triangles arranged on a straight line and I'm gonna use a pink thread on my printed sampler. So I'm gonna turn this over and I've got my thread starting along this straight line and I'm gonna kinda hold the thread to the side, put my needle down at the point or the top of that triangle and then rock my needle back up like that and

the thread is gonna come down behind my needle as I pull my needle through like that. And then when I come down again I'm gonna bring my needle again to the point of that triangle and I'm gonna rock my needle back up again on that straight line, and the same thing, bring the needle, excuse me bring the thread down behind your needle and that creates that first triangle. Same thing again for this next triangle. I'm gonna come up at the tippy top of that triangle, rock my needle up there, the thread goes behind my needle. I'm gonna pull the thread all the way to the top and then I'm gonna go down again. So I have my needle going into the top of that triangle, rock it back out and the thread goes behind the needle like that. Same thing here now, I'm gonna rock the needle down, thread goes behind the needle. So you're just going back and forth. I just finished the last triangle in this line of closed buttonhole and so to end it I need to go over the top in that lower corner to secure the corner of the triangle otherwise it'll fly off when I let go, and then once you're on the back you just tie off just like any other stitch.

Day 18: Three Sided Stitch

- Today's stitch is a three sided stitch which is exactly what it sounds like. It's using the backstitch to make sort of a tessellation that has three sides, and I wanted to show this little doodle in my sketchbook. I just used straight lines to connect these dots into triangle shapes, and you can see how that translates here into a stitch pattern. So it can be used as a border like this but you can also build on that to make a bigger background pattern like I did in the drawing and up here in that embroidery. Let me show you how to do it. I'm gonna start from the right and I'm just gonna make one stitch for every side of the triangle. You might be wondering if it matters what order you go in, and it doesn't. If you are used to kind of cross stitch or something like that I'm you'll come up with an ordered way to do this, but it looks the same on the front no matter which way you do it so I don't worry too much about that. There's not really a wrong way to do it. Oh, I have a little, this is a good opportunity to show you. So you can see how there's a little knot right there and sometimes the best thing to do with these little knots is just get another needle and stick a needle in that little loop and that loosened it enough to be able to pull it out. The drawing on this printed sampler is pretty small so I'm gonna switch to a thinner thread so that you can see the pattern developing easier. So I'm just gonna knot this thread off on the back and switch to a different thread and maybe a different color. Actually I'm just gonna use this same thread again but just use a single ply of it. So I'm gonna pull it out so there's one short end and one long end, and tie a knot at the long end. Okay. I'm gonna start down here at this other end. You can see how I'm bringing my needle up and down. Sometimes it takes a second to find the right place where you want your needle to come up, so just take your time until you've gotten just the right spot. Yeah that's gonna look better. On the printed sampler these are printed on at a certain size and a certain angle but you can really play around with how tight or obtuse your angles are in the triangles. And you can see here how I played around with different angles to make different shapes appear and make the triangles look a little different. This is a really nice thick wool yarn which looks great and it's easy to sew with on this flannel that this particular sampler happens to be stitched on, and up here this is just rows of the same stitch, the stitch right on top of each other to make these sort of pinwheel shapes appear. As with all the stitches I always encourage people to play around with different threads and especially with this one because it's so fast and easy you can really build up some cool textures and get a really different result whether using pearl cotton or a heavy wool yarn, so check it out.

Day 19: Plaid Filling

- Today's stitch is called plaid filling, and it's one that can be done in lots of different ways just like there's lots and lots of different plaids in the world. All it is, is sort of intersecting lines of threads that build up to create these beautiful criss-cross patterns. So the first thing I'm gonna do is lay down the longest line, so I'm gonna do the longest ones this way and then I'll do the next set going in the opposite direction intersecting. So got a nice red pearl cotton here that I'm gonna use for these. So I'm just gonna go up and down, that's one really long stitch. And as I go along with the plaid, the smaller stitches are gonna hold these in place. So right now those look like they're just gonna be blowing in the wind, but they'll eventually get secured with another color of thread. So don't worry if they appear too wobbly at first. Okay, so there's the first set. Gonna knot that off on the back. Now I'm gonna do these lines that are the second longest lines in the plaid as it's drawn here, with another color. And I'm gonna weave over and under to make the plaid a little bit more secure. So I'm gonna start by going over just arbitrarily you could also start by going under, it doesn't matter. So I'm gonna go over this one, under the middle one, and then over the one that's on top. And then take my needle back down underneath. Since I started over here, now I'm gonna go under, so you're alternating to make everything a little bit more stable. This time I went under, over, under. This is a stitch that I would really recommend not doing without a hoop so that you can see how the hoop is maintaining the tension on the fabric. It's a nice, tight drum. It would be really challenging, maybe impossible, to do this without a hoop. Of course, now that I've said it's impossible, someone's gonna do an amazing plaid filling stitch without a hoop and send me a picture. I hope you do, but I would really recommend that you use a hoop actually. 'Cause even though the later stitches are gonna hold these in place, you wanna make sure they're not going completely haywire before you get to that point. Can see that one's still wobbling around a little. Alright, over. Under, okay. Alright, I'm gonna knot that one off. Okay, now we're ready to do the smallest lines in this plaid composition, plaid filling stitch, and I'm gonna switch to embroidery floss. I like the way it lays flat and is a little bit more of a dull finish. This is that two strands embroidery floss that comes on a spool like this from Weeks Dye Works. I'm gonna use that here and I'm gonna do all the stitches that are horizontal and then I'll come back with another color and do all the stitches that are vertical. You can see here that I'm making these two little lines which aren't connected to anything but I really wanted to make sure that the plaid filling looks as if it's going on for infinity, so even though there's not another square right here, there's sort of the implication that the plaid would go on and on. I wanna just reference that as I'm going along. In an effort to save thread I'm not gonna go all the way back here and then carry over. I'm just gonna skip up in this direction. Make that nice, long line. And I'm not weaving in and out here. You could go over under, I'm not gonna do that for these last final ones. You can make that choice or not. I like to just go right over the top at this point. Let's see, got one more to do down here that I skipped. Okay, tie this one off. And I need one more color. I don't really like that blue, maybe a green would be nice, yeah. Last color. And same thing on this layer with the vertical plaids I'm doing the little nod to infinity plaid down here. I think it makes it look more complete. You might remember when we were doing the couching stitch or even the chessboard stitch that sometimes I did a double width, so you can see I'm just doing one single stitch for each these plaid marks. But you could go back and do something of a satin stitch for each of these lines to make it thicker. Or of course you could use a thicker thread. When you're done with that last layer just tie off on the back like you did all the other stitches. Before we end today, I wanted to show you some more examples and here you can see these are in different stages of progress. The first, the second, the third, and more so you can see on this one where there's that blue layer of horizontal stitches in the plaid I did a double stitch there.

Two parallel lines instead of just one little stitch, and it makes it into a different plaid than it would've been if it was just a single. I just wanted to show these in different color ways with different threads and things like that. These could easily be worked in a thicker wool thread or even the cotton tapestry thread. I made mine with pearl cotton and embroidery floss, but of course you could use anything else. I think a wool thread would be really nice, a cotton tapestry yarn, and I also think that the embroidery ribbon would be a cool choice for this technique.

Day 20: Plaited Filling

- Today's stitch is the plaited filling stitch, not that dissimilar from the plaid stitch that we did yesterday. The plaited filling stitch is a collection of interlocking satin stitches. And it is one that is pretty time-intensive, so I already did the vertical lines of satin stitch. And I did them all in yellow, in two different yellow tones here. And now I'm gonna go back in and fill them in with the horizontal bars here to create a checkerboard effect. And one thing to note is that I've created a square here to make this little example of the plaited filling, but you could also make a circle or an eye shape, or it could be any shape you like, as long as your lines are parallel. So you have parallel lines filling the initial space of satin stitch, but those could be creating any outer shape that you like, if that makes sense. Now I'm gonna switch to a red to create a checkerboard effect over the top of this plaited filling. So I'm gonna scoot down here and gather up a few of these stitches. So I'm just gonna go up and then down. So and then I'm gonna make another one right next to it to start to create a little cluster of satin stitches. And you want to go down around the same number of those threads, so I'm gonna try not to split any of the threads. So for example, if I'm going over seven stitches for the first satin stitch that's horizontal, I want to go over seven for the next as well. And I'm certainly not counting them, but you just want to kind of keep an eye on it. Okay, so there's one little grouping. I'm gonna go down here. I'm gonna skip ahead about the same amount of space that I covered for that first one. So I think I'll start about right there, the next little collection. Okay, so I've got two in this line. Now I'm gonna go down between these threads as if I'm gonna make another. You can see where my needle is coming up there. I'm gonna go ahead and come up there, and now I'm gonna go over into this next grouping. So gather up about the same number of threads on this side. You can see how it's easier to tell where the threads are separated at the top. So I'm just kind of dragging my needle down. Whoops, I need to go down a little further, I think. You can just sort of guesstimate. It doesn't have to be perfect. It's a little trickier once you get to the middle section. This stitch is so slow going, but I really like it. There's something really satisfying about separating these little rows of stitches and gathering them up. I think it looks so pretty. Okay, now I'm gonna skip up here to do that little row that's between those two. Whoops, can see that I missed and went into that little bit of thread there, so I'm gonna try to pull that out. Teachable moment. So I'm just gonna use my needle to pull out that, I cut the thread off of my needle in the back, and now I'm just gonna pull that thread out. And now I'm gonna turn it around and try to pull it through from the back. Okay, everything is back where it belongs now. So I'll continue along with that to fill in this checkerboard pattern. You can see that I could've gone one more down in this first row, and I might go back and finish that. You could switch colors. You can see, you know, I used a different yellow at the beginning than I did at the end, and I might do the same with the reds to have a sort of ombre effect with the reds. I think that would be a really cool effect. I have another little sampler here that I wanted to show you with a few different colors and a few different scales. This one, you can see they're a little less regular, which I kind of like the irregularity of it, and they're much bigger, so. I started with pink and went to a darker red. Here are a couple other versions. This one's teeny tiny. I

love the green on red. That's one of my all-time-favorite color combos. You could try this with thicker threads as well. I think this would be really beautiful in wool crewel embroidery thread.

Day 21: Buttonhole Filling

- Today's stitch is the buttonhole filling stitch. You can also call it the blanket filling stitch. It's sort of a comb-shaped edge, and it's often used in applique. You can see here how it was used in this vintage tablecloth to applique this yellow fabric to the white. And I'm just expanding on it here with the filling stitch, adding rows and rows and rows of buttonhole stitch to create this overall background pattern of interlocking comb shapes. I'm working on the sampler upside-down here, so you're not losing your mind. You don't need to turn your computer around. It's easier to do it in this orientation. I've already done one line of this buttonhole filling stitch, and now I'm gonna go through and do another one. And in the way it's drawn in the sampler, I have two sort of little L shapes, and then a break, and two L shapes. You can see here, on the sample, I have some more even buttonhole stitch. But you can do any variation you like. You could do three, you could do less regular pattern, it's up to you. So you can sort of imagine that your line is gonna go all the way across with little interruptions every so often where your needle goes up and down to create these little right angle stitches. So the needle's gonna go down underneath this green thread and under the fabric, and then come up again. The point of the needle will come up again right at that line, and my thread's gonna go behind my needle as the needle comes up like that. Then I'm gonna go down again and rock my needle back up. Try to get that, there we go. Thread goes behind the needle. You might remember this motion from the closed buttonhole stitch that we did a few days ago. So my needle's gonna go down, up again, over here, whoops! And for this stitch, it's actually helpful to have the tension not quite so tight in your hoop. You can see how I'm moving the fabric up and down. And that's helpful to be able to manipulate the needle and rock it back and forth like that. So there we go, up. Gonna pull that through, go down to this end, rock my needle down, and then up again. Down, up. (shuffling) Alright, one more stitch. Okay, and then I'm gonna go a straight line across to finish that line off, otherwise that last right angle will fall apart. Obviously with this first row that I did in green, I didn't have another stitch to grab a hold of, so I just stitched right into the fabric, and that's fine. Makes it easy on this printed sampler, 'cause you just follow along with the guidelines that are already drawn on the cloth. I really like this stitch. I feel like it could look great as a brick wall or some kind of architectural detail. It's a really great sort of linear grid pattern.

Day 22: Battlement Filling

- I'm so excited to share today's stitch with you. It's the battlement filling. It looks really complicated, but it's actually quite easy, and it ends up with this sort of Escher effect, really three dimensional looking situation, and I can't wait to show you how to do it. For this stitch, you're gonna make a series of lines that are crisscrossing across the fabric, and you're gonna make the same color going horizontally and vertical in seven layers, so there'll be a layer of red, a layer of orange, a layer of yellow, a layer of green, a layer of blue, and then purple. I'm using rainbow colors, but you could use any colors you want. I think an ombre effect all in the same color palette would look really cool. So I'm gonna start with red up here, and I'm gonna make one giant red that goes all the way across, and the next one going across the other way. And again, this sort of similar to the plaid filling stitch, don't worry if they're flopping around too much, because the last layer, and the last color, is what's gonna hold it all in place. So you can see how there are these little drawn-on tack marks that are at an angle on the printed sampler, and that is to indicate where those little tack marks are gonna go

at the end. So now I'm making the lines going in the other direction. I'm not weaving in and out, I'm just laying these right over the top. Okay, I'm gonna flip this over, tie these threads off. So I've finished the first grid in red, now I'm gonna come back and do the second one in orange. It's important that if you start with horizontal lines with the first layer, that with the second layer you also do the horizontal lines first. So I'm coming in with the orange now, it's gonna be about 1/16 of an inch down from the red, in other words, right next to the red. So I'm gonna come down here, and I'm gonna do the horizontal orange lines. The orange grid is exactly like the red grid, it's just skewed down a little bit. So that's what's gonna give you the 3D effect once you've stitched all six colors. I'm using six colors, I should say, you could use however many you like. It could be more or less. I wouldn't do many less than four, 'cause it wouldn't get that amazing 3D effect that we're gonna achieve, but you could do, you could certainly do a lot more than six. So now I'm gonna do the vertical orange. You can already start to see now with these vertical lines that the red is receding, not just visually, but it's actually receding in space 'cause the orange is ahead of it. I really love this visual effect, I think this looks so cool. Continue stitching all your grids. I'm gonna keep going, and I'll show you what to do when you get to the last one, and how to tack them all off with those little securing stitches. Okay, I'm moving on to purple, which is the last color. When I'm done with this layer, I'm gonna show you how to secure all these stitches down. Okay, so I'm done with the entire grid, and now I'm gonna go back and secure the top of the purple stitches at each little intersection where there's a crisscross. You can see that the purple is securing the blue, and the blue is securing the green, and the green is supporting the yellow, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, but nothing is supporting these purple threads, so we have to go through and add just a little tack mark over the top of the purple to make sure everything stays in place. So I'm bringing my needle up here right at the intersection of where the horizontal and the vertical meet, at this purple cross, and I'm just gonna go diagonally through that cross, and make one little tack mark, and that's gonna hold the purple in place. I'm gonna do the same thing at every intersection of purple. And you wanna pull the stitches nice and tight, so it's secure. 'Cause you don't want it to go anywhere. You could do these little tack marks in another color, too. I like doing it in the same color as the last layer, but it would be another opportunity to add another bit of color, so you could do them in white, or black, or, you know, any color. And I've got one last cross to do. Just there. Pull that through, and you'll just knot that off the usual way on the back. Make sure you secure it on the back so that all that work of securing those purple stitches isn't lost. I've got another couple examples here. This one's stitched in a combination of thicker threads. It's just three layers. There's a multicolored wool on top, and then a yellow tapestry cotton thread, and then a red wool on the bottom. This one's just three layers too, this is all pearl cotton. And then my mom stitched this version of the sampler in all purples, and so even the battlement filling stitches is just six different colors of purple, I really like the way that one turned out as well.

Day 23: Cloud Filling

- Today's stitch is the cloud filling stitch, going along with this collection of filling stitches that we've been working on the last few days. It's a stitch that looks a lot like smocking, if you remember that from the 1980s, maybe like me you had a dress that was smocked. But this stitch is just on the surface, it doesn't involve any gathering of the fabric like smocking does. It's just a surface technique that makes up a sort of netting effect on the top of your fabric. The first step for the cloud filling stitch is to lay down a bunch of tack marks, and you might remember doing that for the powdered filling stitch, or the fly filling stitch, this is very similar. So, I laid down a tack mark on top

of each of the little marked areas in this printed sampler, and now I'm gonna fill them in. To fill them in, my needle is only gonna skim across the surface and go underneath those little tack marks, so it's a great opportunity to use a really big thread, like you could use wool, crewel thread, you could use cotton tapestry thread. I'm gonna use this needlepoint crewel, this is some vintage embroidery wool, and I've got it threaded in a dull tapestry needle with a blunt end so I don't accidentally puncture the threads as I'm going through. To start you're gonna come up from underneath, and I'm gonna start down here in this lower right hand corner. Tighten that up a little bit, okay. And now that my thread is through, I'm just gonna be skimming along the surface, so I'm gonna go all the way through, like that, and you wanna keep really nice, even, gentle tension, don't pull very hard, 'cause you wanna really maintain these beautiful little arcs that are drawn on here. This is a great time to use a thicker yarn, I think I mentioned that before, not only can you use a thicker yarn, but it'll look much better if you do. A thin yarn won't show up nearly as well, or a thin thread. Would also be a great time to use metallic, since you're not going up and down through the fabric. You could use embroidery ribbon here, a silk embroidery ribbon would be really elegant. So I'm just going up and down, so I'm going, I'm making essentially a zigzag. And if you took my other original sampler class you might remember the filled running stitch, and this is essentially a filled running stitch, just in the opposite orientation that we think of as the filled running stitch, but it's a variation on the filled running stitch. And now, even at this point I can go back and kinda loosen up all these lines so that they stay round and not in a V shape, unless a V shape's what you're going for, and that's fine too, it's just personal preference. I'm gonna use pink for this entire filling, but you could definitely change colors, and to do that, you would just go down underneath your fabric, poke through the fabric with your tapestry needle, knot it off, and then come up with another color. Really easy to switch. All right, so now I'm gonna go underneath here, finish that row, and I'm gonna start again up this way. So for a lotta these tack marks, you're gonna go through them twice, for most of them except for the top and bottom row. Making this diamond or argyle pattern. Continue filling in and out of those little stitches that you made in the beginning that are green until you've filled up the entire composition. And if you want to, you can also do this technique on a plain piece of fabric, of course you can embroider anything on a piece of fabric, but one tip I have for you if you wanna try this technique on a scrap fabric is to use some polka dots, and utilize the even pattern of a printed polka dot to lay down your little tack marks, and they're pretty fun to fill in. Here's another one that's just ready to go that could get filled in with just about anything.

Day 24: Brick and Cross

- Today's stitch is brick and cross and it is a combination of two things that you already know, it's just putting them together in a different way to make a cool pattern that sort of like a checker board with X's interspersed where some of the grid would be. And here is a little example. So it's just a combination of cross stitch and satin stitch. I switched to a different sampler that I have prepped for this one so I have a little bit already done so that I could show you how to fill it in. So we're not starting from scratch here, and I'm gonna use a new thread this time, it's made by DMC, it's called floss, can be sort of difficult to find but it is lovely. I think it's a lot like embroidery floss but you don't have to separate it. In my opinion, it's about one strand of it is about the same as two strands of embroidery floss which is perfect because that's how much I really like to use. So I put it through the needle and then put a knot at the end so it's equivalent of stitching with four strands of regular old embroidery floss. If you're looking for it at the store, you might be able to find at a needle workshop. I know they sell it at Laxis in Berkeley and this is what it looks like, it comes with

one paper tube sort of in the middle. Here it is in this beautiful mint color. It doesn't come in a very wide range of colors, but the colors that it does come in are really nice and saturated color. I've already done a lot of the satin stitch and the cross stitch here but I'm just going to show you a little more for fun 'cause it's fun to hang out and stitch together. And these are drawn as if there's a lot of space in between them and you certainly could stitch it that way but I like to stitch a really compact satin stitch, it's difficult to draw a satin stitch without having space in between the lines. Oops there's a little bit of white thread from my fabric I don't want that there. I'm going to tie this off and then show you how I do the X although it's exactly the same as the cross filling that we did earlier it's just in a more ordered pattern. I did just one of each part of this combination stitch I did one brick and one X but if I were doing this in real time I would do probably all the bricks and then all the X's or vice versa just so you don't have to keep knotting off and starting with a new color of thread. I wanted to show you an example that I'm working on on this piece of fabric it's just a found embroidery of this person watering the flowers and I'm using this brick and cross pattern to fill in around her to make her pop off the page a little bit more. It's a really cool background pattern I hope you try this one out.

Day 25: Backstitch Trellis

- Today's stitch is the back stitch trellis and it's just a grid that's made completely out of back stitch. It's a lot like the three-sided stitch but it's diamonds instead of triangles. I wanted to show you a page from my sketchbook which shows you exactly what this stitch does. It's just a grid set on the bias around the diagonal. I've started some here already in another color of pearl cotton and I'm just gonna continue on. This one is so fun to do and I have a piece at the end that I've been working on a plain piece of fabric as well. It's fun to follow this printed one too though. It's just so easy and you can really kind of get into the zone with it. As you're going along filling this in, you wanna try to go into the same spot at each intersection so the needle's going up and down through that same spot so that you get a nice, crisp grid. So for example, the hole that I went in for these three lines, I wanna try to go back into that same spot for the fourth time going into that hole. I'm gonna keep on filling this in, but before I go, I wanted to show you this bit of back stitched trellis that I've been working over the top of a piece found embroidery, like I like to do. And this one, I'm just been using scraps from my pin cushion so whatever is left on a needle after I do another stitch, or little bits of thread that are laying around. I've been putting them in here and making this kind of all over back stitch trellis pattern. I think it's a really cool background. Sort of reminds me of Tetris or a crossword puzzle.

Day 26: Couched Filling

- Today I'm gonna show you how to do the couched filling stitch and it's another sort of interlaced plaid or a grid. And it's similar to the first couching that we did way back at the beginning, but they're intersecting lines. Today I'm using the cotton tapestry thread. It's made by DMC. It's a nice, thick cotton. It's not meant to be separated, so it's just twisted into this shape and that size is what you get. I've tied it together at the end to make a line that's twice as thick. And I'm gonna make four horizontals and then a few verticals and then I'll show you how to couch them down. Like a lot of these stitches, you wanna be sure that you have your fabric in a hoop so that it's not getting all wobbly. My fabric in my hoop is a little loose. So, just gonna tighten that up a bit. The threads here are a little bit twisted and that's fine. If it's bothering you, you could untwist them but it's not gonna really matter in the end 'cause we're gonna secure them with these little Xs which are drawn on

there and in the end they'll be stitched on. Okay, that's it for the horizontal lines. I'm gonna tie this off. I have another color of this tapestry thread. This pretty mauve color. And you do this right over the top. This is a regular old grid, but you could certainly put this on a diagonal to make diamond shapes. You could also make it on a regular grid so they could be bigger, sort of more rectangular shapes, or diamond shapes that are more open. Now that I've all the verticals and all the horizontals, the last step is to tack them down and I'm gonna use Xs. You could do just one little cross in each corner, but I like to do the X, 'cause it's more secure but I also like the way the little Xs look and I'm using a third color here, this rosy variegated pearl cotton. You're gonna make a little X over every single intersection until everything's nicely secured and finished. And before we finish, I wanted to show you one more example of some couched filling stitches on this bit of an old table cloth. These I stitched all in orange except for this one little green line and it's the same orange cotton tapestry thread that I used earlier. Here's another one that's a little more subtle with green pearl cotton and pink Xs. It's a great way to make fences. It would be a really cool way to stitch a lobster trap. What else could you make with this design? I can't wait to see.

Day 27: Basket Filling

- Today is the last of the filling stitches before we move on to flowers, y'all. I'm so excited to share this last one. It is for sure the most intensive of all the stitches in the sampler, but it's also one of my favorites. I'm a glutton for punishment when it comes to tedious and monotonous tasks, especially embroidery-related tasks, and this one is by far one of my favorites. It's called the basket-filling stitch, and it's basically interwoven strips of satin stitch. Here you can see a finished version on this sampler. I'm going to show you how to do it. I've got one prepped here with most of the stitches complete and you can see how they appear to go over and under each other. It's actually an optical illusion because I just stop stitching where the red is going to go before I continue on with the green, and so on and so forth. And so, I've got one more horizontal and one more vertical line to do. I'm going to go with this variegated sepia tone, and just like here in the brick and cross, this is drawn on where the stitches are pretty wide set, and far apart, but I'm actually gonna stitch them really close together because I want this to look really crisp and neat. You could stitch them however you like, of course, but... This is what I prefer to do. So it's just satin stitches, one right next to the other. I love these variegated threads, especially for something like satin stitch, where you get to see them changing color as you go, it's so fun. Now I'm right up against this green vertical line, so I'm going to go down one more time and make one more little stitch, and then I'm just gonna skip over and keep going now on the other side of that green line, and that's what creates that sort of optical illusion that you're going over and under. This stitch takes a really long time but it's worth it. I hope you try it out, and you can use any thread. I don't recommend using a really thick thread for this one. It seems like it would make everything go a little bit faster but they end up looking kind of sloppy, so, I recommend a size eight pearl cotton sort of as the biggest thread you might use, but that's just my own experience, maybe you'll have a different result. I do have a finished sampler on this blue flannel that I wanted to show you. Here's one that's almost finished. There's another line here to get added in. You can see where I've left a spot for where the vertical line is going to go over, and then in these it'll appear to go under. And if you're working on a plain piece of fabric like this you can use a chalk pencil or a disappearing ink pen to draw a grid on first so that you remember where things are going to go and intersect so your lines don't get too wobbly. Although of course, you could set this one on an angle just like any other gridded filling stitches that we did, or you could even do a more sort of wobbly effect. There's nothing saying that has to be a straight line.

Day 28: Long Stemmed Daisies

- We're nearing the end of our month together, but we're gonna go out with a bang with four more days of really fun flower stitches. And today we're gonna do long stemmed daisies. You might already know the lazy daisy stitch, and this is just a slight little variation that you can do in a couple of different ways. I'm gonna show you some inspiration from my sketchbook before we get started. This is a piece of vintage wrapping paper that I found that looks like a photocopy of vintage embroidery, and then I just continued on with that pattern in my sketchbook. And you can see this little chain stitch drawing, and traditional lazy daisies. And here's another page with just tons and tons of little lazy daisy stitches as a background sort of cluster pattern. Here's some more flowers in another sketchbook. So, the long stemmed daisies are a lot like a traditional lazy daisy, but the connecting stitch is just much longer. So, you might remember from when we did the powdered filling stitch, that these little seed shapes are held together with a little tack stitch at the beginning, and so the same is true on the long stemmed daisies, but we're just making really long tacking stitches instead of teeny, little short tacking stitches. So, here they are. I've made them already in a red cotton floche, and I'm gonna go back in and make the petal part, or the link part. These are all those long little tack marks. And I've done it in two different ways here for the long stemmed daisies. These are opposites. So here the petals are all gonna be in the center with the tack marks on the outside. And here the tack marks are in the inside with the petals sort of going around. Not sure which one makes more sense in nature. Maybe neither of them do, but they make a really different effect so I wanted to show you both of them. And I'm gonna fill in this one first. So you come up at the bottom of this little petal shape, go under but not through the fabric. So you're just going under the bridge of that tack mark, pulling it gently, nice even tension. And then go back down to make the loop. And I'm using this really beautiful two-tone embroidery floss. This is a hand-dyed thread from Weeks Dye Works again. I really like it. It's a combination of purple and brown. I think it looks great. Just gonna go around and fill in each little petal. Those look really cool. I love the way that two-tone thread looks. Now that I've finished the petals, I wanna come in and add a little detail to the center. And I'm just gonna add another round of spokes in green in between each of the red ones to add another little burst of color. And this is green pearl cotton, but it can be any thread at all. There we go. And this could go on and on. I could imagine adding a little seed stitch at the end of each of these little purple flowers. I think that would be really beautiful. I've still got a lot of green thread left on this needle so I'm gonna hop over here where I've already made these long tack marks and fill in this little daisy as well. For these, I'm gonna come up in the center each time and then make the petal by going through the tack mark. And come back down. And it's tricky 'cause I need to come up in the center each time, but I can't come out in that same hole or it will take out the previous stitch. So you have to really sort of be cautious of where you're bringing your needle up and down. But you should be able to find a spot each time without too much trouble. It's sort of like a pickle flower. Okay, one last little petal. Okay, there's that finished little lazy daisy. Here's a little long stemmed daisy sampler I've been working on, and I particularly like these where there's a flat surface almost as if you're looking at the daisy from the side and not from overhead. And you see I made these long spokes and then went back in with the contrasting color which here is the same color as the petals. I think those look really cool. And here are some more that are just waiting to be stitched or waiting to have the little petals added. This is this little asterisk stitch which it looks a lot... It's only five points, but if it were six it would just be the ermine stitch that we did earlier in the month. And I think those little ermine stitches that I made would be a great way to add like teeny-tiny little petals to the end to make sort of miniature long stemmed daisies. So it's fun to think

about how you could combine some of the stitches we've done this month into your own arrangements to make new and beautiful stitches.

Day 29: Buttonhole Flowers

- Today's flower shape is the buttonhole flower and it's the same as the buttonhole filling stitch that we did earlier or the closed buttonhole triangle stitch that you might remember from a few days ago but this time it's just worked around in a circle with the spokes on the outside. Tomorrow we'll do spokes on the inside for the buttonhole wheels. The buttonhole flowers we're gonna do today I made this image over the top of these vintage flower book pages just using a stamp and then I added the spokes around the outside to make this cool repeating pattern. Here's a little area where these buttonhole flowers are printed on and I'm gonna start on this one. They sort of look like sunshines more than flowers I think. It could be either. I'm gonna come up on the circular part sort of in between two of the spokes, pull the thread all the way out. I'm using the same embroidery floss that I used up here for the petals on the long-stemmed daisies and I'm gonna pull that over here sort of pulling it off to the left and up high and now I'm gonna bring my needle down on this spoke at the end of that spoke or a little further and then bring the needle up right at that circle and the thread goes behind the needle as I bring my needle up and that you can see that created the first spoke. Might be a bit hard to see 'cause the brown is so close to that printed black. Now, same thing. I went down at the end of that spoke and I'm gonna bring it back up right at the center in that circle. The thread's gone behind my needle and I'm gonna pull it back up. I'm just rotating the hoop each time, so bring my needle down, come up at the circle, thread behind, there we go. Needle down, up at the circle, there we go. These spokes are each about a quarter of an inch apart. They could be much, much closer together if you wanted to. So, you had a sunshine with a lot more rays so to speak or a flower with a lot more pointy petals. You could also do these instead of spokes coming out, there could be triangles if you work them in the same way as the closed buttonhole. Okay, that's the last spoke and now I'm gonna just go back down right there where I started to secure that last spoke. There you go, there's that first buttonhole flower. Before I go, I wanted to show you some samples on a blue background with a contrasting color thread and these the way they're stitched the spokes go kind of in an angle and they're sort of all nesting in each other which is kind of fun. You can control the way the spokes go by where you're putting your needle and bringing it out. Come back tomorrow and I'll show you how to do the inverse of this and we're gonna do buttonhole wheels.

Day 30: Buttonhole Wheels

- Today's stitch is a variation on what we did yesterday. It's sort of the direct opposite. And it's a buttonhole wheel, or, I like to also call them wagon wheels since that's what they sort of look like. And I have a couple examples here. These are the navy blue part of this printed sampler, those are the buttonhole wheels. And here you can see, it is the same thing, but just in a half a wheel, sort of scallop shape, with longer spokes that go all the way to the center, and that build on each other. I really love how this embroidery makes use of the shape as a all-over background pattern. Here we go with these little buttonhole wheels. I'm gonna start on the outside, and my needle is gonna go in. And I think for this one, I'm gonna go all the way to the center and come back out at the outside of the circle, but you could go, you could go closer in. I'm gonna have it so all the spokes touch the same spot in the center. Aesthetic choice, you don't have to do that. I'm gonna go in again in that same hole, and then come again out at the outside. This'll be a true wheel. Here we go, so I'm gonna

go again from the inside to the outside. Every time I put my needle into the center, right into that same spot, then I'm coming up at the outside and capturing that thread, and each time I do that, it creates a spoke in the wheel. Since these are so small, I'm gonna freehand one of these little wagon wheels next to the printed area, just on the white background of this cloth so you get a clearer idea of what it looks like. So, it just looks like an L at first, I'm gonna go back down in that same hole. Color change happening, love it. I have to turn my hoop a little bit. There we go, that one ended up being a little lopsided 'cause I was making room for the one above it. But, I think you get the idea. I have another couple examples to show you on some smaller samplers here. This is the drop cloth sampler, bubblegum edition, and the inside is filled in with these wagon wheel stitches. My mom stitched this version, and I really like how it turned out. And, incidentally, since we're all friends here, this is chain stitch all the way around the outside these concentric circles. Here's another one, and tiny, tiny, I don't know if you can see, but those are little half-shell scallop wagon wheels in the fuchsia around the outside. And lastly, there's some more of these wagon wheels here, on this fabric and here you can see some green ones, and then I used little half wagon wheels around the outside. I like the way those sort of start to look like barnacles. What I love most about this technique is that the circles themselves look really cool, but I also really love those half circles, or scallops. I think you can get some really incredible art deco effects.

Day 31: Couched Circles