
Paper Flowers: Make a Wild Rose and Thistle Centerpiece with Livia Cetti of The Green Vase

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

Hi. My name is Livia Cetti. I'm a floral designer and a paper flower artist. I was a contributing editor at Martha Stewart Weddings for about seven years. I've been featured in many magazines across the country, including Martha Stewart Living, Vogue, W, Food & Wine, InStyle and many more. I'm going to show you how to make a beautiful centerpiece today, a thistle and wild rose centerpiece. It's inspired by this 6-foot-tall thistle that I had growing in my yard one day that I just let go till the end of the season. And I'm going to show you how to create each bloom. And we're going to use a couple different techniques. We're going to bleach tissue paper. We're going to hand-cut petals and leaves, and I'll show you how to assemble everything. At the end you should have a beautiful, impactful centerpiece to really wow all your guests.

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

To make the wild rose and the thistle, you're going to need a couple of really kind of basic floral supplies, and a couple of basic crafting supplies. A lot of this stuff you might already have. And some of it's mandatory and some of it's not. You can ad lib if you need to. Anyways. These are the different tissue papers that we use today. We're going to use some light green. We just need a little bit to back the leaves as we make them. We're going to use fine crepe paper. This is really available anywhere. And it's in a light yellow, a soft yellow color. We're going to use peach tissue paper, and this kind of burnt orange tissue paper for the wild rose. And then we're going to use raspberry tissue paper. And this is a pretty standard purple tissue paper, I believe, to make the thistles. You just need a few small squares of yellow tissue paper. And really you only need probably about one sheet of all of these colors to make each flower. I just, for my process I like to have larger batches of tissue paper to mess around with and experiment with, and then I can go through and select my very favorite pieces. You'll need a hot glue gun and some glue sticks. These are fringing scissors that aren't mandatory. You don't need them. But they do make life a lot easier. It's just basically like 10 pairs of scissors all put together. And it gives you a nice unison shred. These are just standard floral wire cutters. You can use any kind of wire cutters. You can use ones from your garage, or any kind you have lying around, really, from the hardware store. You'll need a really good pair of paper scissors I really like these Kai brand scissors that I have. They stay sharp for a really long time. And they're really comfortable in your hand. You don't want to get a pair of fabric scissors. Those can be much more expensive, and you'll just ruin those right away. So make sure you have paper scissors that you're using. And then you'll need a quilting mat, a quilting ruler, and a rotary cutter. These are all quilting supplies that you don't need to use. But they're great just to have if you're a crafter. There's a lot of different applications. It took me awhile to switch over. But once I did, I use it for all kinds of things. I love this rotary cutter. And that's how I cut all the tissue paper in nice unison strips. Just goes a lot quicker. But you don't have to. You could just use scissors. And then we're going to use a lot of 18-gauge, 18-inch long, straight floral wire. It's important that you use straight floral wire, because if you try to use the wire that's in a spool, or it comes in a circular bale kind of a situation, you'll constantly have these bumpy, lumpy stems that aren't going to look good. You want to always create your stems using straight wire, and then we'll bend them afterwards to get interesting

shapes. So definitely want to use straight wire. Make your life much easier. And then we're going to use floral tape. We're going to just use a half an inch, light green floral tape, and a 1/2 inch, this is the dark green floral tape. It's slightly a bluer green. We're gonna use this for the wild rose, and this for the thistle. And those are, again, just available at any craft store. And then we're going to use an assorted color of Canson paper. And this comes in a larger sheet at any art supply store, really. And it's like a high quality construction paper. And it is a nice background for the flowers. It kind of has a nice matte finish, and then lets the more delicate flowers really shine through. I've pre-cut them into the approximate size I'm going to eventually cut the leaves. So this is like a 1 and 1/2 by 2 inch segment. And just some assorted sizes. This looks like six inches by 4 and 1/2, or 3 and 1/2 inches. And since I'm free hand cutting the leaves, this is just a great way for me to designate the sizes that I want to create. We use cotton safety swabs for the centers. After much Q-tip research, I have found that these are really wonderful. They have a hollow tube that you can just insert the wire right in and tape in place. And then we kind of create the centers around these, and they give a nice, even-looking shape for each center. You're going to need just a container to mix your bleach solution in. I recommended a non-corrosive container, such as metal or glass, and something that has a nice large opening. This is about four inches wide opening. It's about six inches deep, so that you can easily dip your tissue paper in it and not get it all crinkled up or anything. And then we're going to use just standard household bleach. And notice you can only get this concentrated lately. But either will work. I'll show you how to use the concentrated bleach. And then finally we're going to use a drying rack. I like this one because it's metal and plastic. And I recommend kind of just having one that you use solely for crafts, because the bleach can reactivate and wreck your clothes if you were to use it to dry clothes with. It could be a little bit dicey. So I recommend just keeping one just for crafts.

Chapter 3 - Make Wild Rose Stem

Cut and bleach paper strips

We're going to start off by cutting all of our tissue paper into strips, and then we're going to bleach a whole bunch of it. I like to do a big bleach day. I'll start off my day bleaching and cutting. As long as your blade is sharp on your rotary cutter, you can cut quite a few sheets at a time. I probably have about 20 or so here. I can tell how it feels, and you'll get the hang of it. You could experiment a little bit. Also, tissue paper has a grain. A lot of people don't realize that. But you want to always make sure to work properly with the grain-- it'll help you fold your petals easily and will behave properly. It just acts a little bit strange if you're not working properly with the grain. The best way to determine what the grain is is to look at the overall dimension of the paper. This is a really standard dimension for tissue paper. It's always going to be 20 inches wide and around 31 inches long. It's kind of a strange dimension there, it's about 30 inches. It's always folded in the half here. If it's got a fold, this fold is always folded perpendicular to the grain-- it's the way that you want to cut. You're going to cut parallel to this fold. If your package is a smaller, mixed package that you get that doesn't have this central fold, you just want to make sure to cut the tissue paper so that your strips end up being 20 inches long. That's the best way to determine that you're cutting it properly. For this project, we're going to cut some three inch strips and some four inch strips. They don't have to be perfect. You're going to always be trimming the petals. Don't worry if it's not exactly four inches, or if it's not exactly straight-- that's not really important here. I do recommend though you want to always try to hit a seam right on this fold. You don't want the fold to be running down the middle of your petal. That's not going to look very good. It'll show up in the final product. But just go through

the whole sheet and alternate between three and four inch strips. Some instances I like to just leave a long one at the end and experiment with a six inch strip or something like that. Go ahead and cut all your tissue paper that you'll need for the wild rose and the thistle, and then we'll go ahead and bleach it all at the same time. You just want to get everything cut all at once. We're going to create a bleach solution to dip our tissue paper in. I'm going to use concentrated bleach. I don't give a real specific recipe, because you really have to experiment. Each tissue paper will react a little differently. Each color will react a little differently, and each effect that you want to get might change. So I recommend doing some test batches. And this is a concentrated bleach, so it just is a little bit more like a gel. It kind of sticks together in the water. So we just want to make sure to give it a good stir, and that will mix it around so it's even in your water. I'm going to start with some purple. I'm just going to roll it up into a loose roll. Just going to fold it about two inches onto itself. You could see, real simple. You don't want to do it too tight. You want the water and the bleach to be able to get in there. But by no means does it have to be perfect. I do it real quick. You just dip it in for a second or so. Just shake off any excess and then unwrap your swatch of paper and hang it up on your drying rack. You could see here we have some that we've done earlier. And you could see this is a much weaker batch of bleach. And then we added a little bit more, and we got the desired effect that we wanted with the bleach. So you have to do a little testing, but this I would keep. This could be really pretty for something else. Maybe I liked this purple the way it is, and I want to erase the machine look of this tissue paper. You could really see how this side's going to make a much prettier petal. Then this side would look kind of machine-y, and not that interesting. This side looks much more natural and pretty. Now we'll do some orange-- 15-20 pieces. And we're going to roll it up into two inch, basically a roll just like that, and then dip it in. Might get this to go a little bit higher. So I'm going to leave it in slightly longer, and you can see the bleach start to come up. And it'll keep continuing to climb up the paper. Sometimes that gives a really nice effect. And I'm just going to delicately unfurl it. You always want to handle the dry part. And then we'll hang it up to dry. And you want to always clip it to a dry part, and that'll less likely have it tear and fall off the drying rack. You can tell that's going to bleach right away. You can start to see there. But you always want to give it a little bit of time, because the effects are going to slowly occur-- it's not going to happen instantaneously at all. The effects will occur over the next couple minutes or so. So I just keep working, do a whole bunch, and then check back and see how it's looking. I think that's going to look really pretty. Go ahead and bleach all of the tissue paper that you'll need for this project for both flowers and hang it up to dry. And you're going to have to wait until everything is fully dry to start making your flowers. So if you want to speed up the process, I recommend just blowing a blow dryer on there. If you let it dry naturally, depending on your climate it will take an hour or so. But sometimes if you want to speed that up you can just put a blow dryer on it. And I call this technique dip dying. But in my book, *The Exquisite Book of Paper Flowers*, there's a lot more techniques that you can learn about. You can see right here this is all one color tissue paper, and we've gotten all these different techniques just from dipping it in bleach in different ways.

Create blooms

Now that our tissue paper is dry, we can start assembling our flower. And the first thing we're going to want to do is create some centers. Before that, though, we have to learn how to use floral tape. Floral tape is activated by stretching. That's what makes it sticky. If you just unroll it and feel it, it's not sticky. So it's kind of a coordination thing. You have to learn to twist it on the wire at the same time you're stretching it and activating the tackiness of it. I think the best way to learn how to floral

tape is to just practice. You're just going to use one piece of wire, and you could tape it about five or six times and really get the hang of it. I just start by sticking to tape onto itself, really. So I'm twisting with my left hand, I'm pulling with my right hand, and I have the tape positioned on the diagonal. And then I'm using the warmth of my fingers to kind of smooth the tape in place as I go. So it's just a coordination. You're stretching and twisting. Stretching and twisting. And then smoothing, stretching, and twisting. Stretch and twist. And I've kind of trained myself to hold the tape in my hand, because I do really a lot of taping, and I can do it pretty fast. So this just makes it so I don't have to pick up and down real quick. But you don't have to do that at first, if you don't want to. You could always tear some pieces of tape off. And I recommend tearing it. I don't recommend cutting it with scissors, because it'll kind of make your scissors gummy. But you could just tear off some pieces like this. And it goes quite a long ways, because you're stretching it as you go. So I would just recommend taking your same wire. Tape it to itself. And then practice. See? And it's really heat-activated also, as well as the stretching. That really smooths down the tape. Often in the directions in my book, I talk about pinching a petal in place. And you're basically pinching it to the tacky tape, and that will really hold it in place. And you want to always keep this tape at a diagonal. If you start to work more perpendicular to the tape, you can see how inefficient it is. You're basically not working down the wire, and you're kind of just making this big thick chunk. So you always want to make sure to have that tape diagonal to the wire. You can see how thick we got here. It would really become bulky if you continued like that. So you want to have that on as steep an angle as you're comfortable with. And you really want to just give yourself enough time to become comfortable with this technique before you start making any flowers. It'll just be so much easier, and you'll be much happier with the end result. To make our center, we're going to start with our Q-tip, safety Q-tip. I'm just going to trim the stem a little bit. And you can see, it's got that good hollow stem to it. And we can just insert the wire right in there. Just perfect. And then we just use our floral tape to tape it in place. I'm going to go ahead and trim this wire in half, because I don't need the full length for this project. OK. We can go ahead and tape the whole stem at this point. You see how the tape just continues on with itself? I smoothed it in. OK. Then we're going to take two 1 and 1/2 by 1 and 1/2-inch squares of tissue paper and just basically fold it around the Q-tip, head like that. And just smooth it around. Kind of pinch it underneath. Hold it in place. And again, the tackiness of the tape, you're kind of pressing into that, and that helps hold everything in place. Then you wrap the tape on itself and cover all the visible tissue paper. And just allow the tape to attach to itself a little bit. And here we've created what I call a tape line. And I'll be referring back to that. Every time we add another petal, or we finish creating the center, we want to adhere to this tape line. When we put another row of tape on, basically, you want to just keep adding it in that area. If you don't do that, your flower will kind of start creeping down the stem, and the petals will start happening lower and lower down the stem. You'll have a strange elongated kind of a flower. And when you look at it here, you'll see wire, and it's just not good. You want to just be aware of keeping everything up close to this tape line. Then we're going to take some of our fine crepe paper. Looks like I've got kind of like a 8 or 9-inch piece here. And it's about 2 inches wide. I've left it a little bit wider, just so I can hold onto it while I'm cutting it. Just kind of fold it up loosely. It doesn't have to be perfect. You can use the fringing scissors to do this, or you can use just normal scissors. I'm kind of just cutting a little fringe. And then once I've cut my fringe, I can go ahead and trim this a little bit. I just was kind of leaving myself some space to hold onto, so I didn't fringe my fingertips by accident. And then basically, you just kind of open it up, gather it up into a nice workable piece. And you're going to basically just wrap it around your center like this. In my book, I call this a poppy

center. I use it for many other flowers-- the poppy, obviously. And the spring anemone, it's the same thing. I just create it all in black. And it's also used for the Japanese anemone, and for this project, the wild rose. And that's it. That's our center. Go ahead and make all the centers that you think you'll need for your project. I have included about five on this branch here. And if you would like to make a couple more branches, you can start by making a dozen or so centers, and get those all ready now. I have these other ones that I've made here. So I've used a couple of different-colored tissue papers, and it gives it a subtle, natural effect of-- you know, on a branch in nature, the top flowers would be just opening, and then the ones in the middle would be in full bloom. And then the ones on the bottom would be kind of dying and wilting. And so I like to subtly show that by changing the color of tissue paper on the bottom bloom or the top bloom. It just gives it a little bit more interest and makes it seem more natural. We've kind of included a couple of different-color tissue papers that you can make the same bloom out of, and then arrange them accordingly on the stem. We're going to cut some petals now. We have three different colors here, that we're kind of using for this project. This is a peach. This is kind of a dark peach. And then this is a burnt orange color. I'm going to cut some petals here. I'm going to move some of this out of the way. OK. I like to kind of pre-cut the strips into more manageable pieces of tissue paper. And then I come back and cut the petals into them. Basically, these petals, I freehand cut, and they kind of look like a heart shape. So each packet has been bleached and dried, and it's probably about 12 pieces of tissue paper. You can really cut quite a few at a time. I don't think you need to worry too much about counting. Just kind of pick up a grouping and cut it, and if your scissors feel like it's too much, then take some off. But for the most part, if you have good scissors, it should be just fine. So these are kind of like a freehand heart-shape petal. And all of these templates will be available to download online. So I'm just going to cut a few of these. These are about 3-inch-wide pieces that I've cut from the strips. And the finished petal looks like it's about an inch and a 1/2 wide. Again, this is just a really inexpensive material. And you can see, not each petal is exactly the same. But that lends a natural feeling to the flowers. It doesn't look machined. In nature, most petals are going to vary quite a bit in size. I'm also positioning the bleach side up on the petal. I could switch it and do the other way, if I thought that would be a cool effect. And then also, I make some smaller blooms in this flower. So I'm going to basically cut this paper down to a 3-inch strip and cut some smaller petals that'll ultimately make a smaller bloom. I often do that. I start with a wider piece of paper, and then I cut it. But I'm being very conscientious of where the bleach is happening on the paper, where this line is. I'm thinking about where I want it to be on the petal. Basically just trimming the tissue paper to work for me the way I want it to. And also, sometimes you get the little markings from the drying rack. I try to always cut those off. You don't want to put that on your flower. It'll not look pretty. For some reason, one of the things that I love doing the most is just kind of throwing everything on the ground. [LAUGHS] And then I get to traipse around in all the beautiful shreds of paper at the end of the day. It makes me really happy. Here you can really get an idea of the two different sizes. So these petals would create a flower this size. And these petals would create a flower this size. You can see how ultimately that petal size is what makes the flower size change. And I could make larger petals and just keep making the flower bigger and bigger, kind of. So go ahead at this point and cut all your petals at once. You'll probably need about 20 or so per flower. So you're going to need a couple hundred. So go ahead and just cut a whole bunch. But it should go pretty quick, because you're kind of cutting them in the packets. Let's start with a little bloom first. I'm going to pick this color. Not mixing the colors, again, just to reiterate. These would be to make separate blooms. And basically what we do for this flower is we're going to take one petal at a time, and

we're going to just create a pleat in it. So basically, this gives us our cup shape. And you can see you through the paper really well here, that you're just creating like a dart, like on the side of a dress, that helps give the paper form. And then you just pinch it at the end. So it seems a little bit-- you know, you have to get the hang of doing this. And the more you make, the more you'll get the hang of it. And just do it real quick. You want the pleat to be-- it's probably about a 1/4 inch at the bottom, and then the pleat stops about 1/2 inch from the top of the petal. And it really helps give the petal shape and form. So I'm just going to go ahead and pleat 20 or so petals. I think that's about enough. So we'll just take one center and start to assemble our flower. I'm going to tape the rest of the stem at this point. And basically, what we want to do is take the pinched part of the petal and put it right up against our center. You kind of have the pinched part stuck into that tape that's a little tacky there. It looks like that from the top. And we're going to start attaching petals. And you want to maintain the tape line. So when you apply tape every time, you're always going to that line, and you're going to go around twice or so, until you've covered that tape. But you don't want to keep taping down the wire any further than that every time, or it'll get really bulky and ugly. Kind of just keep pressing the pinched piece right there. You don't need to have a lot of tissue paper. It'll really attach on pretty securely with just a little bit of floral tape. Because it's so light, and the tape is so much stronger than tissue paper, that it really holds it in place pretty well. I'm overlapping it by a 1/2 inch or so. But with this flower, you really like it to be kind of a random-- with this flower, you really like the petals to be attached in a pretty random fashion. I don't want perfect concentric rings of petals. I think it looks much more interesting to kind of put two to the left, one to the right, one on the top, one on the bottom, and just kind of work your way around until you have a balanced flower. But you don't necessarily want it to be spiraling, perfect petal placement. So I put the first two here. I'm going to put the first two on the other side of the flower. And I like to place the petals while I'm looking at the flower. So you're kind of placing them, and then you turn it over when you go to tape it. You don't want to be placing it not looking at the flower, just looking at where you're going to place it, you know? You want to make sure that you're placing it while you're looking at your flower. OK, so I'm kind of just creating a nice round shape. But all the petals were totally placed randomly. And I kind of keep adding them until I think it looks good. When you're creating long black branches of blooms, it's nice to have some that are denser with petals, and then some that are thinner, that just have a couple petals. I kind of like them, sometimes, when they look like half their petals maybe fell off. Like thinking about all the different stages that flowers go through as they bloom, and trying to kind of capture that in tissue paper. And I think that looks pretty. I mean, it's not perfectly balanced. You can kind of see it's a little thicker over here. But I think it'll look nice on a stem like that. And often while I'm working, I just like to keep a lot of bottles around. It's easy to just kind plunk the flower in it while you're working. You don't have to lay it back down on the counter and risk getting it smushed or anything. And it's easy to kind of take it back out and continue working on it. So I just collect bottles, and you know, old wine bottles or whatever. And you can keep them around to put your flowers in as you work. Now I'm going to make a larger burnt orange flower. Move that out of the way. Select a nice center. And then again, we'll pleat all of our petals and then pinch them. And do a whole bunch, around 20 or so petals. I find it's easier to just complete all your petals at one time. Get them all prepped and ready to go. Then when you go to assemble your flower, you're not picking it up, putting it down, picking it up, putting it down. You might do it anyways if you decide that you want to have more petals. But it's kind of good to start off with 20 or so, and you can reduce that a little bit. OK, that's probably about enough. I'm going to start assembling. Again, we're going to randomly add petals around. This flower seems to be kind of

more of a wide-open looking flower. So I'm going to just let it do that. So I think this flower will definitely be the star of the branch, because it's so pretty and wide open. And then to balance that, then you'd want to make some that are more closed, and some that are tighter-looking. You always want to feel in your hands, like, this portion of the taped stem is firm. If you start to feel like stuff's shifting or moving, you're probably going to want to start over again. Because basically, somewhere along the line, you didn't tape down far enough to attach the tape to itself, and it's just kind of spinning in there. And it's better to just kind of start over. It can be really irritating. And again, you always just want to be looking at your bloom, thinking about what it needs to be completed. And you can tell that this side looks really pretty. This side looks a little flat. So I'm just going to take my two last petals and put them right in that hole. Fill out that side of the flower a little bit. I'm just pinching them right onto the base of the flower. But I'm looking at the top of the flower to make sure that I'm placing them in the right way. And then I'm going to turn it over to tape it and watch what I'm doing there. Just put the tape on itself. Go around twice or so and attach the tape to itself. And pinch it in place, like that. I think that looks really pretty. Kind of fluff the petals, if you want to. So you just want to be aware of the flower. If you do leave it down on your workspace and go away and leave it for a day or two, it will take on the shape of the smushing here, kind of. So that's why I think it's really good to have bottles around. And you can kind of always just bend the head like that a little bit, and rest it in your vase. And that'll keep it perfect until you come back to work with it. They are sensitive to the environment, a little bit. At this point, you're going to want to go ahead and make all the rest of your blooms. I've made a couple more here. And then we'll come back and assemble the stem.

Make leaves and assemble stem

For all my flowers I like to hand cut the leaves. And these are all pre-cut pieces. And then I kind of cut the leaf to fill in this piece of paper. Don't have to think about it too much. We'll provide you with all these templates. Don't expect you to freehand cut them at first, if you don't want to. The wild rose leaf is definitely one of the more special leaves. I thought about it for a while before I tried to make it. And then it's actually not that hard to cut now that I'm used to it. But it seemed like a crazy endeavour at first. Once you have cut out your leaf, then I like to just hand fold these little veins into it. And again, I think it helps catch the light in a pretty way. It makes it look three-dimensional. And I don't recommend laying it down on the table and giving it a hard, straight crease, by any means. I like that it's kind of a soft crease that you do in your hands. With certain leaves, you can kind of start to get the crease to kind of curve a little bit, and make it rounder in shape. You can see once you fold it, it gives it a nice three-dimensionality to it. It catches the light in a nice way. Much prettier. As opposed to just a flat leaf. You can see how if it's just flat, it's definitely not as interesting. I'll fold this one too. Not looking for perfection here. We're just looking for some idea of veining on the leaf. Just go through real quickly and fold the veins. You want to think about how veins would work on a leaf. They would go down the center. And then they would come out the center of each leaf. That's what I'm looking to emulate when I fold it in. So again, just much prettier once it's folded. Much more lifelike. Again, it's really important to have good, sharp scissors here, or this will not work at all. You want to have really smooth, unjerky cuts. You don't want to have rough areas. So if you do you get those, you just go back and trim again. Go back and revisit and smooth it out. See, like right here, I kind of jogged over. So I'll just go back and smooth that out a little bit. It doesn't matter if the left side is bigger than the right side. That's just how leaves are in nature. It's fine. They don't have to be perfectly symmetrical. So then of course, you get to throw

that on the floor too. And I like to make about six or seven leaves to go into each branch. And I've already kind of completed some here. I'm gonna show you how to assemble the wire on the back of the leaf. So once you've folded your leaf, you can flip it over. And we're going to attach the wire to the back of the leaf, and create our finished leaf. So we're gonna use a nine-inch long piece of 18 gauge wire that's been pre-taped. So it's ready to go. We have the hot glue gun, and give a pretty ample bead of glue down the back of the leaf, about an inch or so from the base of the leaf. And then we're going to use these pre-cut strips a light green tissue paper. It's about half of an inch wide by three inches long. And I just have a ton of this cut, ready to go. And then press it in place. Let it dry. And then you're going to flip it over. And this is pretty long. I don't need that much. I can tear it off. And then I just kind of fold this. I don't even care if you can see it kind of a little bit from the front. It's like a nod to vintage millinery leaves that I collect. They always just hide the mechanics on the back with a little tissue paper, or something. I think that looks nice. But it is important to have a pre-taped wire. And then that's your finished leaf. We have a bunch of assorted colors of leaves. I like to mix the colors of this for some reason. With this rose, I think it looks pretty to have varying leaves. Once you have all your leaves and flowers cut and made, and you're ready to go, we can start to assemble our balloon. Basically I like to start with one or two really pretty leaves that I think are nice together. Start with two, the same color green. And then I'm just going to start creating a stem. I'm gonna bend this leaf here, and then lay the stems flush together. I'm gonna tape it in place. As we assemble the stem, you're not going to always tape to the bottom every time. You're just going to tape a couple inches down until where you might imagine you're going to add your next stem. So I'm going to take down about four inches or so down the stem. If you tape down to the bottom every single time, it's going to get really bulky and thick at the end. It's not gonna look super pretty. I'm going to go in and pick-- this will be at the top of the branch. So theoretically in nature, this would kind of be the bud. So I'll pick that one first. And always, as you add it in, I'm looking at it. This tape was sticking out. I can smooth that down a little bit. And I'm gonna just position it so it looks natural and nice with the leaves that I have. And then you can see on this side, I'm gonna tape it right where I've bent that stem right below the base of the flower. And I'm gonna tape down three or four inches, keeping everything smooth and neat. And then looking at our blooms, I'll pick one that's also made with a smaller petal, but it looks slightly more open. Kind of just creating a natural flow. Not every single branch would be the same. You can see from the side, just taping it right where I've bent it, one stem flush to the other. I like to create the stem keeping it straight. And then when I'm done, I can come in and bend it in an interesting way. But it's much easier to tape things straight. I want to keep all these wires nice and straight. And I'm gonna add a leaf. I'm going to do a different color leaf. And maybe put it on the other side. The left side. You want to make sure to give space in between each element, because this is going to be going on a table. It's not a corsage or something, so you want to make sure to give the branch a little space. When you're all done, it'll make it breathe nicely. So next I think I'll put an orange bloom on. This is our star bloom that I thought was really nice and open. I want to have that be kind of in the middle of the branch and facing right at you, kind of. I'm going to tape it in place right, again, where I've bent the stem, so that's its main stem is flush with the main stem. So I think I would like this bloom to be facing to the side of this star bloom. But as I feel on my stem here, I'm getting a little weak in the stem. And I'm losing some of the strength of the stem. So I'm going to add some leaves on to extend the stem a little bit before I add that flower. So I'll put one leaf here. Maybe one additional leaf below it. Both on the same side. And that'll kind of reinforce my stem. Instead of using reinforcing wires, I'm just going to use the leaves to extend my stem. Kind of fan them like that. And

then my stem is strong enough to add this flower. I have this one really facing towards you. And then this one can kind of be off facing to the side. Go ahead and tape that in place. That looks nice. And I'm looking at my leaves. And I think I want to have one darker one on the same side. I like to always-- you've got two. You've got one. Then you've got two on this side. And if I did one over here, then it would be kind of like I'm repeating a pattern. So I like to break up that pattern, because I think that nature often does that. So I am going to put one more on this side. And I'm going to break that pattern that I had going there. And I'm gonna bring this darker green that I like. I'm going to put this final bloom here. I think I'll do one more leaf over here. But I'm not going to make this stem long and reinforced in the same way that I would if I were making this a flower that I want to put in a vase. I want to lay this down on a table, so I don't need a long stem. So I'm just going to add this final leaf on. And so I trim that shorter than I definitely would if I were going to ever put this in a vase. It's more of a decorative object. It would look really pretty just laying on a credenza, or laying on a stack of books, or something like that. Kind of a special object. Another way to think about displaying a paper flower. And then to just finish the bottom, we're going to turn it upside down. We're going to basically just pretend like we're taping from the top of our wire. So we're gonna start it off. And tape down an inch or so. Just press that in place. And then you're done with your beautiful wild rose. It's looks so pretty. And you could make-- I mean, really you could make one of these, and it would look beautiful on the table with a candle. If you're having a big dinner party and you really want to go crazy, you could make three to five, depending on how big your table is. And then we're going to mix it in some thistles. It's gonna look really cool.

Chapter 4 - Make Thistle Stem

Make blooms and leaves and assemble stem

Thistles are kind of a little bit of a different flower for me. They are not a pretty fluffy bloom. They're kind of a little bit more pokey and sticky, but I think that they provide a really great contrast to those fluffier blooms. After a while when you just have beautiful, fluffy feminine bloom after feminine bloom, you want some contrast. And I think that these provide a really good contrast to all those more feminine flowers. To make this thistle, we're just going to take our bleached and dried paper. Got a great effect on this paper. I love the color change. And you basically-- we'll split this in half so I've got about 10 pieces, but I'm going to then fold in half so I am actually fringing a little bit less overall. And we're going to use our fringers for this. You could use scissors if you don't have fringers, but in this case, you are going to save a lot of energy if you do it like this. And you want to push them way back into that the very base of the scissors so that you can cut as far as you can go. That's allowing me to make a good inch fringe, and then I might use my other hand to really make it as long as possible. You want to make sure that you're fringing into the purple so that you can see both colors in the finished product, so I'm going to use both hands. It looks probably more like I'm getting an inch and a half of fringe, which is pretty good. And unfurl it. We have that beautiful fringed strip. And we're going to use our ruler again for a slippery surface. We're going to take one sheet at a time and just gather it up in our fingers. Step it along like this on the bottom part of the strip, not on the fringe. Just going to step along and then pinch it into a nice fanned piece. I'm going to do this a couple of times until we have enough to make one blossom, one nice big fluffy pom pom. I love this color combination. It's really a cheerful color combination. And then you can kind of get an idea. I think that would make a good pom pom size. So we're going to take one piece of the 18 gauge 18 inch long floral tape, and we're going to put some dark green floral tape on it this time. And in this instance, I'm going to use the whole 18 inches because generally I make large branching

thistle pieces, and so we can leave it long. We don't need to cut this in half. I always like to tape the end of the wire so that when you add tissue paper it'll stick and stay in place. If the wire was untaped, it might slip around and ultimately it might slip off the wire after a little wear and tear on the bloom, moving around at all. We'll add the next piece of tissue paper to our bloom. Again, we're maintaining our tape line, and you can see how tacky the tape is there. Keep getting little fringe stuck, but that's OK. I'm going to cover. It doesn't really matter. And then one more piece. Going to maintain, again, the tape line. So that's good on tissue paper top portion of the flower, but really when you look at that what makes it look like a thistle is kind of having a more bulbous base to it. So with all of our other flowers we're trying to keep this as small and petite as possible. With this thistle you actually want to build it out a little bit because that ultimately makes it read a little bit more like a thistle I think. So we're just going to take some more purple tissue. It can be any tissue. If you bought a color you don't like or something, you can use your scrap tissue for this. Basically you're just going to loosely roll it up into a hollow tube. You're going to do it a couple of times like that. And it looks like it's a little smaller than an inch-- or an inch wide is fine. And basically I'm just wrapping it around the base of the flower, wrapping it around like that. I want to make sure that I have tape on the top to attach to, and just pinch it in place a little bit. Play with it to get it stuck there, and then I'm going to tape over the whole thing, keeping the fringe separate. I'm going to tape that one more time to smooth it out a little bit. You can it's kind of creating a slightly more bulbous area here, and you really wouldn't want to just do this with tape. You could use a lot it take to get it that thick. I'm going to do one more little roll of tissue paper. You just want to make sure that you're really securing it on there well. So if you need to go over it a couple times with tape that's fine. Remember to have some at the top to attach your tape to. Just pinch it on there. I do this often when I'm attaching a bunch of wires at once too. You can do a rough tape. So that kind of tacked it in place, and then I can go back and fill in a little bit more with the tape. And again, I'm using these two fingers to press the tape down, press the tissue paper into place, and kind of sculpt it. Here you're just going to keep taping to fill it in. So this is a little bit of a jump here for the tape. It's not liking that. That's why it keeps tipping, so I'm just going to build it up here a little bit and then come back at the top, and hopefully step that in a little bit so you can just bring your tape straight down. See there? It would do it for me because now it's thick enough. So I think this looks good. It's quite bulbous, and it really starts to really look like a thistle. I think that helps quite a bit, the form of it. And you can go ahead-- I've made a couple more here, and I've just used some different colors. This is a nice raspberry. And I've also rotated the tissue paper, so you could use the bleach side pointing out, or you can use-- like these two here you see this is a great example of using the same color tissue paper with either the bleached portion facing in or the bleached portion facing out. These were originally the same color tissue paper, and then we get these two very different effects. So you can really see that this bloom here looks like it's fresh and it just opened, and maybe this one is slightly starting to fade. It's been open longer, and it's starting to die a little bit. I think that looks really nice. And you put it on a stem together to have that natural color variance. And another thing you can think about is creating different size buds. Basically this one has about an inch and a half long fringe, and the only difference here is that I only fringed about an inch of the tissue paper and then gathered it up in exactly the same way. And you end up with a small bloom as opposed to a large bloom. So I think it's nice on one individual branch to maybe have a couple different sized blossoms also. And then the final thing that really makes the thistle look special is the leafs of course. And I'm going to cut some for you today. I have a couple already made. Just really pretty and spiky. They're so sharp in real life. They really hurt if you've ever tried to

wrestle a full sized six foot high thistle out of your garden like I have. So I've pre-cut pieces of our Canson paper to approximately the dimension of the leaf that I'm going to create. And I'm freehand cutting these, but of course we're going to provide you with templates. I don't expect you to freehand cut yours right away. Eventually you probably will feel comfortable enough to start freehand cutting. It does make it go much quicker. Maybe not the thistle, but there's a lot of other flowers that are much easier to get the hang of. This one, I just think of really spiky things as I'm working. And again, you really want sharp, sharp scissors, and you want to go for really smooth edges on all of your cuts. I love the way thistles have kind of white veins all in them too. I thought about a way that I could accomplish that for a while. Someday maybe I'll add some cool white veins on. And then basically once you have your cut leaf, it's very two dimensional. And so I recommend bending in some veins. You want to do this real loosely. You don't want to have sharp pointed creases that you, say, put down on the table and really put a lot of pressure on. You want these to just kind of be light quick veins just to give your leaf a little dimensionality and to pick up some shadow. Some of the skinnier ones are harder to fold so I just leave those flat, but you could see how much more dimension it has once it's been folded, and we kind of use this blue or green paper for the thistle. You're going to finish the leaf the exact same way that you did for the wild rose. Just going to flip it over, and we're going to use some pre-taped wire that is the 18 gauge and it's about nine inches long. And the hot glue gun, you're going to want to put a good inch or so pretty ample bead of glue down the back of the leaf on the vein. And put your wire right into it. And you're going use one of your pre-cut light green strips of tissue paper. It's about half an inch wide and three inches long or so. And I just have those all pre-cut and ready to go for general leaf assembly. And then you're going to just trim that down a little bit because you don't need all that tissue paper on there. And then you could see that I've tape this in light green wire. That's fine. You're just going to go back over it with your dark green tape. And you need to just only tape a couple inches down because this ultimately will become part of the stem and you won't see that at all. And there's your completed leaf. Go ahead and make all the rest of the leafs you'll need to create one branch. I figure you'll probably need about 12 or so leafs. Really the thistle is all about using a ton of leafs. That's what makes it interesting. It's less, really, about the flower and more about this textural leaf thing going on. And also I've made just a couple of these leafs too that are kind of just smaller. They're basically the top part of the more complex leaf, but these look nice right up at the top near the flower. Now we're going to assemble our stem, and always looking at everything as you work, getting rid of a little glue gun business, and just making sure everything looks great as you assemble it. I'm going to add this on two inches from the base of the first flower. I'm going to tape down a couple inches, and I'm just looking to create some branches of thistle. So a couple more inches down we'll add another leaf. You can get in a natural rhythm of this. There's no specific spacing, just using your eye. And then I'm going to start using the larger size leaf. A little glue there. Get rid of that. We'll add one more leaf. Again, I'm just bending it at like a 30 degree angle in the opposite direction of the leaf before it and then taping it in place so that its stem is flush to the main stem. That's a good start for that guy. Now for this one, it's got a larger bloom so I don't have to use the littler leafs to start with. I'll probably pick the shortest one. This one looks good. Just tape it again a couple inches from the center. You see how I just taped that on flat? You can do that either way. You can either bend the leaf first or tape it on flat, and then you could come back and bend it in place. Bend it 30 degrees from the main stem. You can bend it first, add it in the other direction. We just want to have these leafs developed enough with enough leafs on them to attach them together. Put one more stem. So I think this looks good. We're ready to attach the two flowers together. And

basically I'm going to imagine where I'd put the next leaf. I'm going to just bend the whole stem like that right about where I would put the next leaf. If I were going to put one more leaf, it'd be right about there. So once I bent that stem right there, going to attach it to the other stem about right where I would add another leaf. If I were going to add another leaf, it would right there. That's just a good general rule for spacing. And you can see how I'm keeping the bottom stems really flush together and taping them together. And then we can come back and adjust that a little bit, that angle. And then we're going to put another leaf right about in the same area of where we made our attachment. And as you're creating this bloom, you want to think about how a normal plant would progress down the stem, how that leafs would get larger as they go down the stem and probably become more spaced out a little bit as they got further down the stem. And just try to emulate that as you're attaching the rest of the leafs on the stem. I've got two more, so let's just use them both because really this plant is all about the leafs for me so I might as well use all the leafs. And again, if we were using this in a vase, I would be using reinforcement wires to extend the stem, but since we're just going to be laying it on a table, it does not need to have a really long stem. So I'm just going to trim that there. Just going to finish it with tape by folding it around like you're wrapping a present or something. You're just wrapping it around, and we're going to take down an inch or so, and it's all nice and finished. And at this point, you can make sure that it rests nice on the table. I like the way the branch is coming up. It's not resting flat on the table, and we can adjust any leafs or anything that's preventing it from laying flat. But you still want to have some life coming up. You don't want to make it all too flat. Go ahead and make two or three more stems, and then we'll come back and assemble it all into a beautiful table setting.

Chapter 5 - Finish

Assemble centerpiece

Look at our beautiful finished table arrangement. It looks so pretty. I really love all the colors and the different textures. And none of the stems are attached to each other. I've just kind of nestled them in here in a pleasing way. I even let the stems stick out. And you could add votives and two tall hurricanes or a candlestick. You just want to be careful you don't set your beautiful paper flowers on fire. But you could definitely nestle in some accents. And you could also really extend it. You can see it's not attached at all. It's just nice little objects that we made earlier. And we're just nestling them together. You can kind of extend it if you wanted to, and make it for a much longer centerpiece. See? It's just the branch just sitting there. And then I've woven in the wild roses into the thistle. Any arrangement of paper flowers on a table can make a really nice centerpiece. You want to think about just using a single branch or all these put all together. And you can really see how pretty the color palette is. And it's really helpful to kind of vary the colors the way that we've done down the table. That'll help kind break up our installation. But I think it just looks so pretty. I'm really happy with the way it turned out.