

Free-machine Flower brooch

This technique is quite easy to master and creates fabrics which you can sculpt into dimensional pieces.

You will need:

- Anchor Alcazar machine embroidery thread: 1 spool each of Scarlet Red, Dark Red and Black
- Anchor Metallic machine embroidery thread: 1 spool of Red
- Water soluble fabric – 2 pieces each measuring approximately 20cm x 20cm
- 15cm Embroidery hoop
- Biro (DO NOT use a felt pen)
- Bowl of water
- Sewing machine
- Scissors
- Small safety pin
- Small round scrap of red felt



How to:

Using the biro draw a simple flower pattern approximately 6cm across from petal tip to petal tip on one piece of the water-soluble fabric. Use any of the Flower Templates given if preferred, scaling it up or down to suit the required size.

Image 1a

You will notice that I have wispy bits radiating out from the petals of my flower. If you want to add these to your design, do it before stitching. Wind off lengths of thread from the reels and place them on top of the remaining sheet of water-soluble fabric. Place your other sheet with the flower drawing over the top so the threads are trapped between the two sheets of water-soluble fabric.

The following images do not show the loose threads as they would be too distracting.

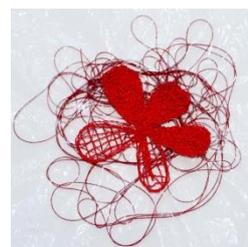


Image 1

You will now have two sheets of water-soluble fabric. 2 sheets are easier to work with and more stable than 1. Insert them into a hoop so that the stretched fabric within the hoop touches the table top – this is the opposite way round to how you would normally mount fabric for hand embroidery.

Thread the machine with Dark Red on top and Scarlet Red on the bobbin (this thread will also be seen on completion of your flower).



Image 2

Disengage the feed dogs by lowering them on your sewing machine and attach the darning foot (also sometimes called a Trapunto foot). Place your hands on the edge of the hoop and now gently manoeuvre the hoop by hand so that the needle follows the lines of the design. Go over the outline of the petals 3-4 times and don't worry if they cross over each other (it's better if they do...) or are not quite so neat.

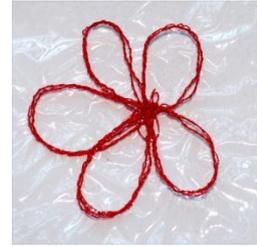


Image 3

Now work vertical lines within each petal, radiating them from the centre to the tips as shown, ensuring that you also go over the outlines at the edges to catch them together. Continue to do this for each petal.

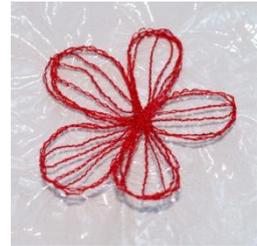


Image 4

Next, work horizontal lines over the top of them, again ensuring that you go over the initial stitched outlines.

Each petal should now have a base grid. This will act as a stabiliser "fabric" for the top stitching and will not be seen in the end design. Now for the top stitching...

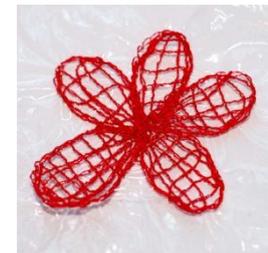


Image 5

When you look closely at a flower petal it has a "grain". These are lines in the petal which run from the flower centre and up the length of the petal to the tip. We need to recreate these grain lines to fill in the petal so work as you did for the initial vertical lines, filling in the petals by working up and down the length of each petal, working completing them one at a time using the Dark Red. The stitching should be dense so there are no gaps in the work.



Image 5a

To add depth, work some lines of shading using the Scarlet Red Alcazar and working over the top of the previous stitching. Finally, in the centres of each petal work some stitches using the Metallic thread. You can see some of the detail here.

Complete the motif by threading up the Black, working stitches in a radial motion from the centre outwards as shown here.



To make up

Take the fabric out of the hoop. Cut out around the edges of the motif so that very little of the water-soluble fabric is visible – about 0.5cm. If you have trapped some threads between, cut each layer of water-soluble fabric separately so that you do not cut the threads. Immerse your motif in a bowl of warm water and leave to dissolve for about 20 seconds. Now rub gently between finger and thumb to remove the sticky, gluey residue.

Leave your motif to dry on a non-porous surface such as a plate or a metal tray – NOT on a paper towel! The petals should automatically curl up as they dry but if they don't, you can easily mould them to the desired shape and leave them to dry in that position.

Image 6

To make into a brooch, take a penny size piece of red felt and stitch the safety-pin to it securely, ensuring that you sew the correct part of the safety-pin to the felt (open it up to check).



Image 7

Finally, sew the circle of felt securely to the back of the flower motif (you can glue it in position first to ensure a strong connection).



Design development:

You could develop this further: Consider the following suggestions:

- Work a darker shade in the centre then blending to lighter tint at the tips of the petals
- Work thin and thick petals
- Work differently-shaped flowers such as lilies (which are trumpet-shaped)
- Work a smaller flower and layer it on top of a larger flower to create a more flamboyant flower, a bit like a water lily.
- Trap snippets of ribbons, voiles and sheer fabrics between the fabric layers
- Work large and small petals together using contrasting colours such as found in pansies

What else could you make?

- Necklaces
- Bracelets
- Earrings
- Wall hangings
- Stitch lots of motifs together to make a lacy fabric for a bag panel or to make a strap (flatten the flowers whilst drying).