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Simple

All over patterns are often the simplest to start with, but custom quilting is more interesting and really brings a quilt to life...but then you are faced with a multitude of questions and doubts over what to quilt where! Does that sound familiar? I remember being in that position not so very long ago!

If you are working on a traditional kind of quilt, you will have blocks, sashings and borders to think about. Blocks and borders can be a little more complicated so let's leave them for another issue. Rather let me try and give you some simple ideas for filling sashing strips; those small 1½-2½ inch borders that surround and frame blocks in a traditional quilt layout. They are very much like the outer borders but are generally quilted in a simpler pattern.

First of all, I would ALWAYS stitch in the ditch in these sashings. I know it's nobody's favourite task, (including mine!) but believe me, it will make your quilt look 1000 times better. Stitching in the ditch fixes your quilt down, keeps it straight and helps stop distortion. Try to use a thread colour that will blend with the fabrics of your quilt rather than stand out. I'm not really a fan, but monofilament or invisible thread is

good for this task. That way, if you do deviate from the ditch it will be less noticeable. (Photo 1.)

Ok, let's start by free motion quilting loops in the sashing around a block. The first thing you should practise is not turning your quilt. If you only have one block then it is probably small enough to be able to turn comfortably, but if it were a block in the middle of a king size quilt, then it would be very difficult to turn. This means you need to be able to quilt the same pattern in 4 different directions: left to right, top to bottom, right to left and bottom to top. (Photo 2.) It doesn't matter whether you go in anti-clockwise or clockwise direction, as long as you go all the way around. This can be quite tricky because you will have a preferred direction for quilting a pattern, and when you try to mirror it or quilt it upside down it can be really difficult! Practise makes perfect ladies and gents, and practising on a piece of paper or white board before you go to stitch on your quilt will really help!

Spacing your designs is important when quilting sashings so here's a useful tip: Start right in the corner with a design that points into the block then put in an odd number of pattern

repeats across the width of your sashing. This way you will be able to fit in equal numbers of designs and get the corners to look consistent. (Photo 3) I use the pattern of the block to help me with the spacing or eyeball the gaps, but you can mark yours in the beginning if it helps you!

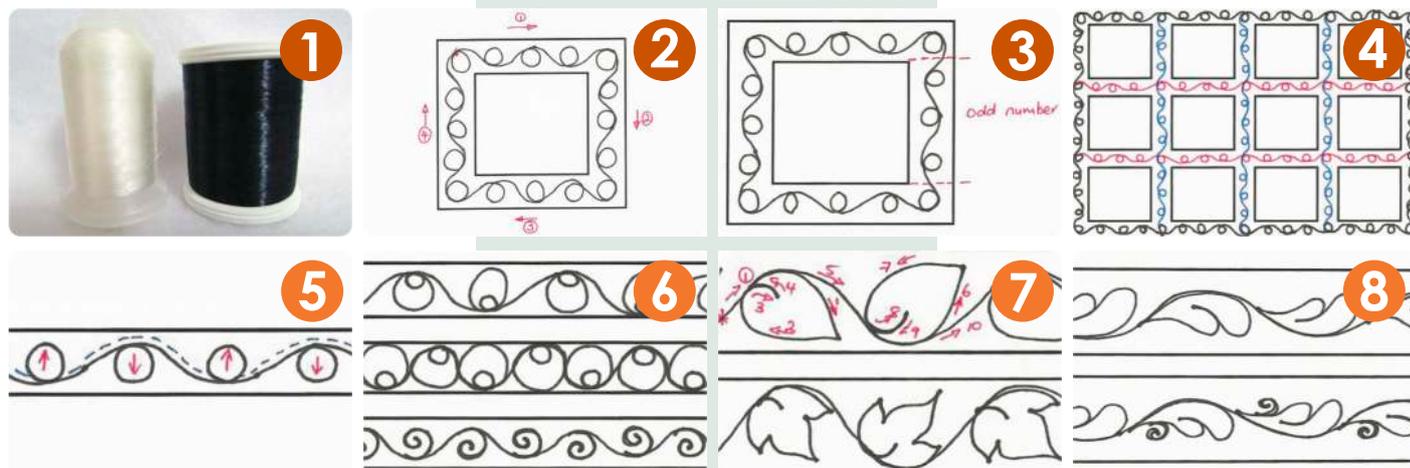
Now of course, most traditional quilts are made up of multiple blocks, not just one! This means that you have crossover points in the sashings so you need to look at how you are going to quilt them. If you look at the "quilt" in photograph 4, I would first work the outer most sashings, then do the horizontal sashings in between and finish with the vertical sashings. The crossover points between the blocks can be looped over existing ones and still result in a pleasing pattern.

So we can practise putting in circles or loops into sashings, and it's probably one of the easiest patterns to start with. You can use it as the basis of many other simple sashing patterns.

If you look at the loops that I quilt, I alternate between the circles pointing up and pointing down (Photo 5). This gives you an overall wave effect. If you struggle to get the up and down

Sashing Designs

Hopefully now that you've read a few of my regular articles, you will have been motivated to try some of your own free motion quilting! It doesn't matter whether you quilt by hand or on a domestic machine or a longarm machine, as long as you are quilting, getting your projects finished and most importantly having fun! The designs are the same no matter what technique you use...



effect, draw yourself a wavy line and fill in shapes in the open spaces until you get the idea. Once you can do the loops in your sleep you can try changing it up a bit to make the designs more interesting. Add a second smaller circle to the loop design, place the loops much closer together or use swirls instead of closed circles but remember, the idea is to have a continuous line of quilting so there's not starts and stops to worry about (Photo 6). You can very easily change the loop or circle into a leaf design by making a point in the loop and adding a vein...(Photo 7). I've added numbers to the diagram to show you the stitching order. Leaves are great and a very forgiving shape to quilt! No two leaves in nature are

exactly the same so yours don't need to be either! Play with alternative shaped leaves and see which you are most comfortable with.

Finally, everyone loves feathers right? Well, almost everyone! So here's a very easy sashing you can quilt with a simple feather, and again, you can change it up and make it unique to you! (Photo 8).

As with all quilting designs, they are like your handwriting...unique. If your drawing and quilting doesn't look exactly like my drawings here, don't beat yourself up about it but rather revel in the diversity that we as quilters can produce.

On a final note, this is one of the last things to tick off on my To Do List before I head off to Durban for Festival 2015. I'm looking forward to meeting many of you there, having lots of fun and sharing lots of laughs...and I can't wait to see all the beautiful quilts!

Until next time...happy sewing!

Claire

For more information, to attend a class or to have a quilt quilted please contact Claire at www.quiltastix.co.za or 082 562 5983