

See shells!





The Sewing Connection

Shirley Adams' passion has long been with the fiber arts, which inspired her career choices. First came many years as a college professor of clothing and textiles. Shirley created the Fashion Merchandising Degree at Ball State within the School of Business. Following this was The Sewing Connection television series, which aired throughout North America. Designing fashions for 17 seasons resulted in the creation of a new pattern line concept called Alternatives where engineering mind meets artist's imagination. She pursues her latest passion by creating fiber paintings using exquisite collections of fibers, yarns, ribbons, intricately handwoven into fascinating patterns which will add grace to your walls or integrate into wearable art.

Contact your local high school or community college. Are they offering classes? Perhaps you could teach a class if they are currently not available. Don't ask your self "how," but rather "why not?"

If you would like to reproduce this lesson for your classroom, please do so in it's entirety. You can help ensure the next generation embraces and cherishes the art of sewing.

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See Shells

A shell is a convenient sleeveless garment which slips under anything, and is not meant to take a starring role. Bring it into the limelight by giving it personality.

Change the neckline from a shallow round, only large enough to pull over your head, to any other shape. A **V** or a deep round or square are all very easy to convert. Go drapey into a cowl either front or back. Bring it up higher and include an opening. Add a collar, a ruffle, a scarf.

Revise the body of it by moving the side seam dart to any other location. Design possibilities take the floor when it emerges into the neck, the armhole, shoulder or even the center front if a center seam permits. The addition of waistline shaping gives rise to princess line designs and side, front or back openings.

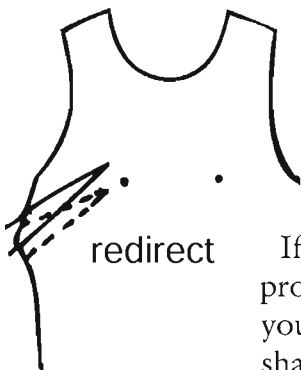
Think also of fabric manipulations and all manner of decorative treatments. Embroidery, machine lace, appliqué, cutwork, pleating, layering, floating panels, pintucks. Endless variations of embellishing flash through your mind. Typically only a little of this shows at the front jacket opening, but with such artistry evident, you might want to shed the jacket and show it off.

Add a cap sleeve for a cute summer look, which can either be an extension of the shoulder area or a separate sleeve seamed at the shoulder point.

Cut it on the bias in a soft linen or a wool crepe and it may slip over without an opening at side or back. What a versatile garment this is, taking any direction you choose.

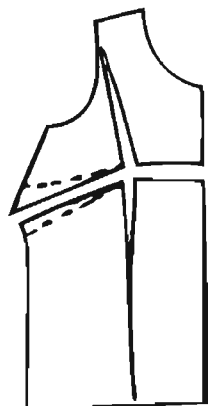


Bust Alteration First

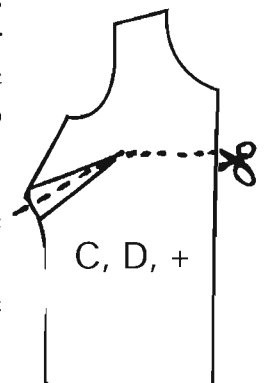


The basic shell looks like *this* when front and back pieces are used. First, redirect the dart so it points exactly to the bust apex, but stops a little short of it. To see if it does indeed angle just right, pin together the cut out pattern front and back at shoulder and side seam after first pinning in the dart. Try on and mark a dot exactly at your bust point.

If the dart points too high or low, simply *redirect* it so it points properly. Draw in the new line. When the location is correct, consider your shape. This pattern, as most, allows for a **B** bra cup. If you are shapelier than this you will need to add extra length and width to accommodate your curvy figure.



For a **C**, **D**, etc., cut a line at the bust level straight across from the center front to the apex, then out through the center of the dart. Separate the shell top and bottom adding about $\frac{1}{2}$ " per bra cup size above a **B**. That means for a **C** add $\frac{1}{2}$ ". For a **D** add 1", etc.



Now that it's long enough, widen the bust, tapering off above and below. The amount you widen will be one half what you lengthened. The reason is that the pattern is only one half a front. When it is cut on the fold there are two fabric layers. For example, if you lengthen this $\frac{1}{2}$ " for a **C** cup, widen it $\frac{1}{4}$ ". The two sides together would then equal $\frac{1}{2}$ " same as the $\frac{1}{2}$ " length.

Mount this on a backing paper, fold the dart in place and while folded trim excess off the side seam. This will leave the correct little "jut" X shape out at pattern edge.

The new dart will and should be larger than the original. The shapelier a person is, the bigger a dart must be to fit properly. When the larger dart is sewn in place, the front side seam will be the same length as the back side seam, so no problem exists.

Your upper arm size will make a big difference in the shape and depth of the armhole. Make up your first trial in an insignificant fabric, then correct it as needed. If your upper arm is somewhat large, that armhole will need to be cut out larger and lower as dotted line indicates. These little variables are easy to correct. Using the sleeve pattern will also require that you cut the bodice a little lower.

If your shell will be tucked into a skirt or pants, stitch the hips tighter. If worn outside, make room for that extra garment space.

The *waistline* might be nipped in on the side seams providing there is enough ease to pull the shell on and off over your bust. You could also shape it further by adding waistline fitting vertical darts. Pin them in as you stand before a mirror and if you like the effect, and if it will still pull over your bust. Mark these dart lines on your pattern so they can be repeated on successive garments.

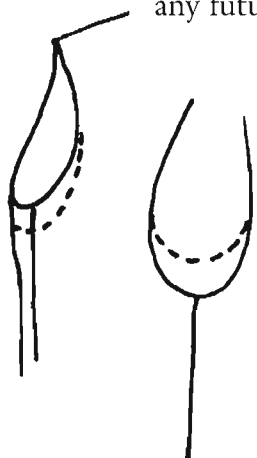
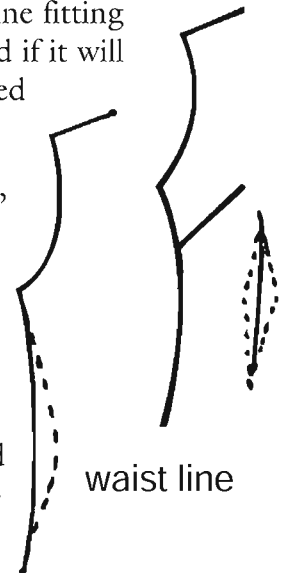
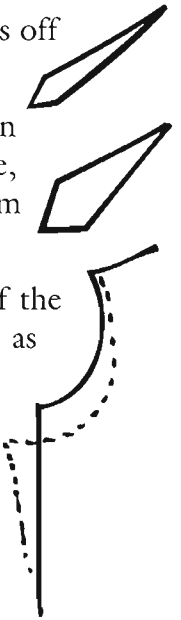
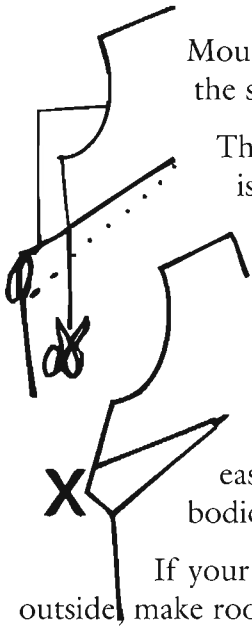
The bust may need more ease if you set in a short sleeve. When your arms move, it would pull the bust tighter so any time sleeves are added, you will need to cut the bust a little larger.

While the test garment is on, tie a string around the waistline and mark on the fabric all the way around. This line will be necessary if adding the skirt to make a dress so you know the correct overlap placement.

You have adjusted for bra cup size as explained, now stitch together shoulders and side seams. Try it on again for more fitting changes. For example, do the bust and hip area provide proper ease? Do you want to shape in the waistline on the side seams somewhat? Remember it must be loose enough to go over your bust when taking the shell on or off. Is the length to your liking? Now is the time to make all adjustments, correcting your pattern accordingly. It saves all sorts of time when you correct the first time with assurance that any future garments will fit as you prefer. Alter once, use forever.

On this trial garment, also check the armhole fit and the shoulder seam slant. If your shoulders are more square or more sloped, change this angle accordingly. The armhole is perhaps too small if you have a large upper arm. Simply trim the underarm area out a little larger to accommodate, but not so low that concealing lingerie is a problem. If it is already too low, tape some paper on the pattern in that area and round it up higher for a thinner upper arm, making the opening smaller.

Remember while checking this armhole area that your finish will make a difference. If a bias binding is used, it will be the same size when finished as it is now with the raw edge. While if using a shaped or bias facing, it will be a seam's worth larger (lower) all around. The same is true with the neckline.



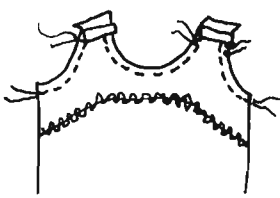
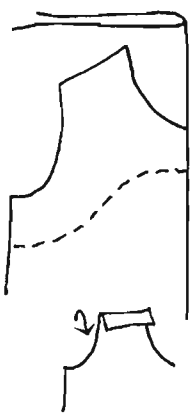
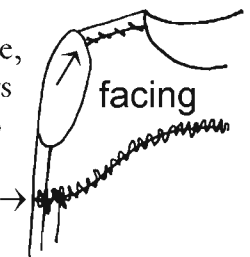
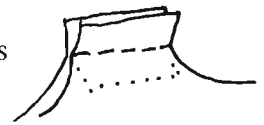
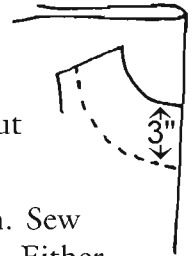
Neckline

Shaped facing: your preference or current fashion, your choice as you sew. Easily change from the standard round to deeply scooped, squared, V-ed or shaped in any manner you desire. A shaped facing is then a duplicate of the garment neckline.

Once you have designed the neckline you want, simply move the shell front to an uncut piece of the same fabric - or any fabric - and cut that shape a second time on shoulders and down to the center front or back. Remove the garment piece and cut the lower edge off about 3" long. Do the armscye the same way.

Interface the facing if lightweight, perhaps not if the fabric is heavier or already firm. Sew together the shoulders and press the seams open. Trim off half the facing seam allowances. Either serge the facing outer edge or turn it under $\frac{1}{4}$ " and stitch to finish.

Right sides together, stitch facings to neck and armscye edges. Grade seams (trim different widths) and clip all along the inside curves so it will turn smoothly. Turn right side out and under-stitch if necessary. This entails stitching through the facing and seam allowances up close to your original line of stitching, which will hold it all to the garment inside when pressed. Around the neckline you then need to tack by hand the facing edge to the shoulder seams. Around the armscye you might need to hand tack all around the facing edge to keep it inside.

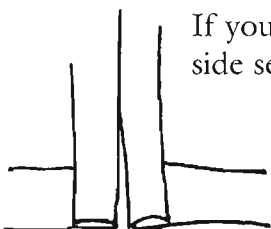
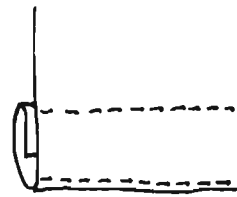


Sometimes you might cut these two faced areas as one (as illustrated). For this, leave the shoulders open until later. Press the facing shoulder seam allowances to the wrong side. Sew around neck and armscyes joining the garment and facing. Grade, clip, turn right side out through the open shoulders and press. Stitch right sides together the shoulder back and front to join. Press the seams open, trim off some of each and tuck them into the open shoulder. Whip the facing-end-folds together by hand. Hand tack at the side seam to hold facing in place.

Hem Hem (you were expecting Hemming-ways?)

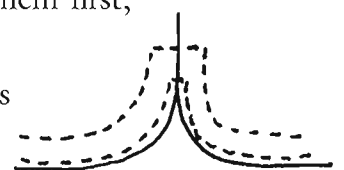
Upper area decided upon, let's move down. Some of us are always cognizant of the fact that we could at any time gain a little weight. Typically the hips are affected first so instead of stitching the side seams all the way down, stop a little below your waist and backstitch. Leave the lower part open to produce vents. If you put on an inch, a vent says "so what," there's room.

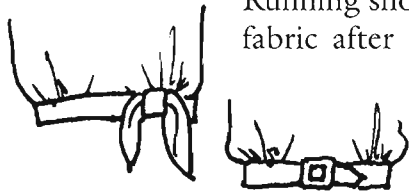
For that hem, if it will be tucked into a skirt or pants, nothing special needs to be done. Press lightweight fabrics under twice, then merely machine stitch for flattest result. For a little heavier fabric, turn it under once. Serge the raw edge to finish before machine stitching it in place. Added to a side vent, that means stitch up and around the opening when you reach the side seams.



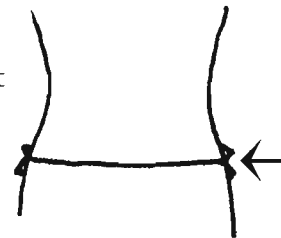
If you should wear this outside your lower garment, turn up the hem first, side seam allowances last, before you stitch.

That lower line need not always be straight. If wearing it as an overblouse outside the lower garment, curve to add an interesting note.





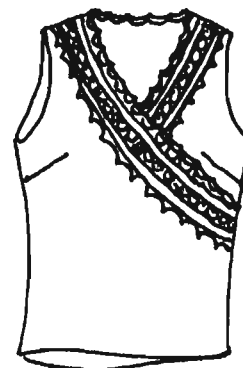
Running short of fabric? I frequently do, so make a shell of leftover fabric after making another garment first. In this event, seam it somewhere below the waist to extend its length if it will always be tucked in. If it will be worn out, consider a decorative band that will look like the intended design rather than a “whoop’s.”



One Shell, One Hundred Shells

1) Simply Decorative Stitching

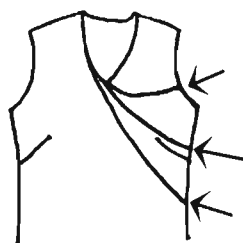
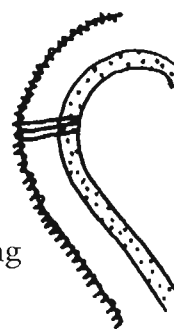
Make a shell pop with simple (or elaborate) stitching. Combine rows of stitching that touch each other with the resulting appearance of a wide strip of lace outlining a V neckline. Further, use the first row, by choosing a scalloped design, to make a scalloped edge on the neckline. There will not be the usual bound edge or finished seam on a shaped facing. Use a facing to strengthen it. All the lace will be stitched on two fabric layers.



Cut out the shell front and back and change the neckline to a V just slightly higher than you think you want it. Cut a duplicate for a facing front and back. Serge shell shoulder, side seams and lower edges. Join each unit at the shoulders, press open, trim off half the facing seams. Serge the outer edge of the facing to finish it. Leave side seams open for now but stitch and press darts.

Color match thread to the fabric or create contrast with a deeper or paler hue. Metallic anyone? This procedure uses a lot of thread so have enough on hand before beginning.

On the wrong side of the facing, fuse a 1" strip of a fusible web like WonderUnder . **Do not** use the heavy duty type fusible that cannot be stitched through. Peel off paper. Wrong sides together pin facing to shell starting at shoulder seams and working away from them. Press neck edge to fuse the two layers together. This strengthens the edge so that later it can be cut off close to your decorative stitches without fraying in the wash. Machine baste (large stitches) out near your serging line so nothing “creeps” in the decorative stitching process. The basting will later be removed.

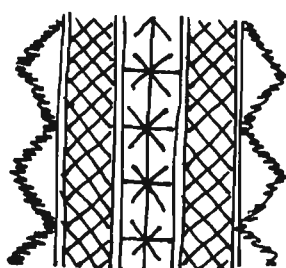
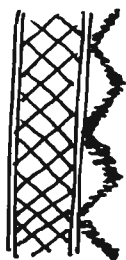


With a chalk pencil or air soluble marking pen draw a line about $1/2$ " from the neck edge, maybe extending one end clear over to the armseye or side seam of the opposite side. Where it can gracefully point depends on the shape and depth of the V.

Choose a stitching design for the first line that produces an interesting scallop type edge. Begin at the X and go up the left front, around back neck, and the long right front all the way over to the finish point. In doing each line in this order the finish line covers up any possible irregularities in the starting points.



this then this



Choose a second design and resist from this point on the tendency to watch the needle producing its fascinating magic. Instead watch the line on the right edge of the design - where it occurs on the foot - so this second design just touches the first design without leaving any space between.

Do the same with successive designs, however many you choose to combine depending on how wide you want the lace grouping to be. End with the same design with which you started so both edges are identical.

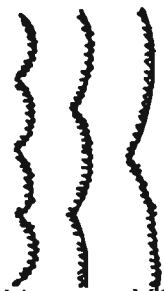
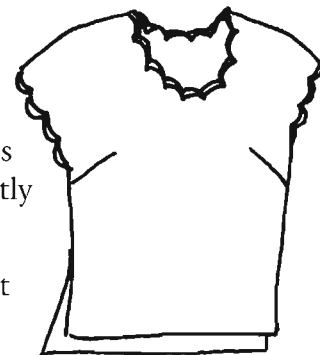
Carefully trim off excess fabric from neck edge close to your stitching line with little scissors being careful to not cut into your stitches. Sew together the side seams, finish armholes, hem.

2) Scalloped Edges

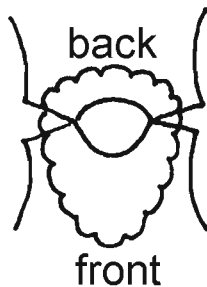
Along the same lines as the decorative stitching, ideas abound browsing through a fine linen shop. On linen tablecloths or napkins or pillowcases you see marvelous scalloped edges and cutwork designs. Faggoting or drawnwork can be very elegantly effective.

For scalloped edges try out first on a scrap to experiment until you find the best treatment for your fabric. It might be best to simply stitch one layer if firmly woven or like the Simple Decorative Stitching, fuse a brief backing layer (facing) to it. Delicate fabric will need stabilizer behind it, but be wary in tearing away the stabilizer as it could all pull apart. A water soluble type is a good solution.

Find an appropriate stitch pattern among your decorative stitches and test on a scrap fabric. If too small to be effective, can you enlarge it on your machine? Experiment with different threads. A heavier 30 weight provides more impact than a thinner 40 weight embroidery thread, filling in luxuriously.



X1 X2 X3

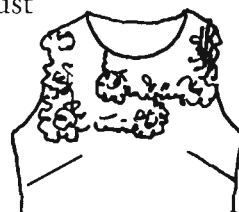


Perhaps scallop a second piece of fabric to use as a collar in a square or round shape? After scalloping its edge, lay the back and front shell patterns on it to cut out shoulder - necklines. Stitch shoulder seam together and pin to shell neck. The right side of the collar needs to be against the wrong side of the shell. Stitch a shallow seam, clip all around, turn the collar to the right side and the seam will be concealed between layers.

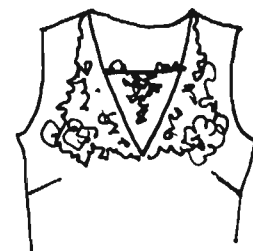
In a linen shop, I noticed on a sale table a single, lonely cutwork placemat with scalloped edges and beautifully done handwork. When fabric speaks, we must listen, but how on earth was I going to cut up and use this piece? Well



Sideways slightly extending out over shoulder.



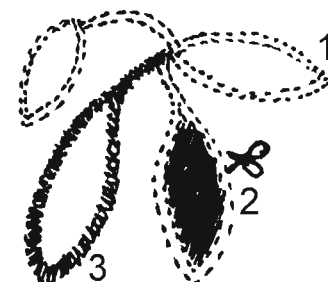
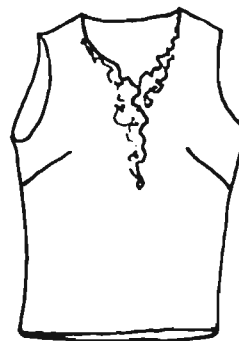
Lengthwise, both ends on front.



Both lapels on a deep V and an inset inside.

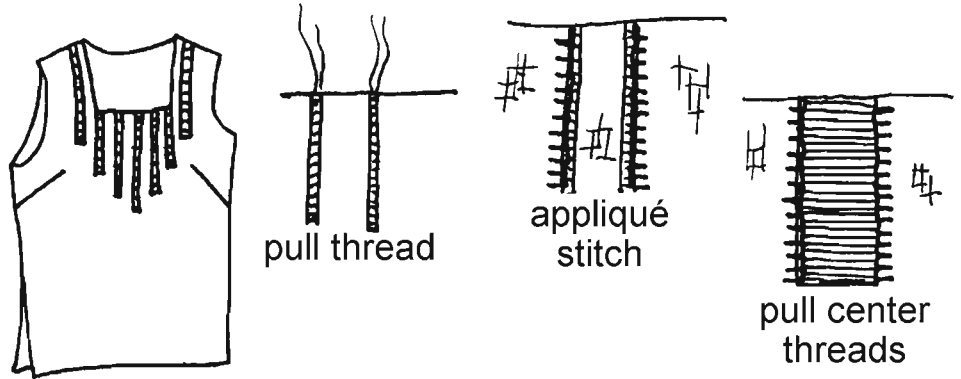
3) Cutwork

Draw or trace a design around the neck edge. Straight stitch around each line twice with lines close together. Using little scissors, carefully cut away the open spaces. Set a close stitch length (.4), and satin stitch all around. Try different widths, maybe 2.5 or 3. Use an easy-tear stabilizer underneath to produce a uniform look. Always experiment on a scrap first to perfect your technique.



4) Drawn Work

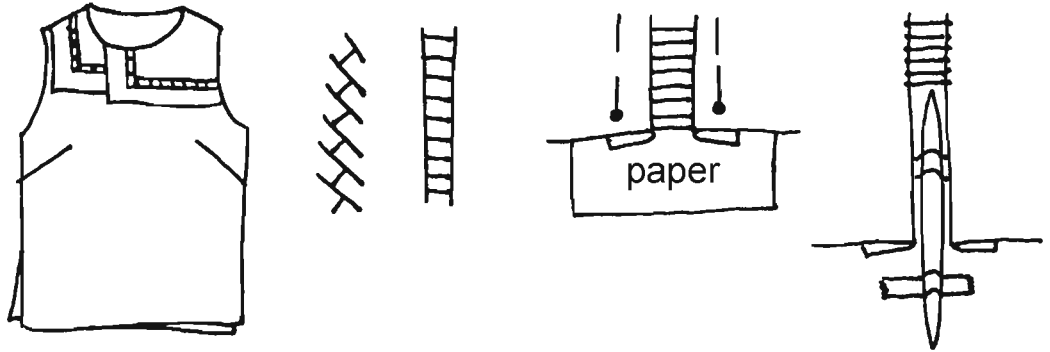
Nicely done on linen or easily raveled fabric because you first pull out a thread or two from each side of the open space you want to create. Stitch a line of appliqué stitches on either side to secure. Then pull out the rest of the threads between stitching lines for a stunning effect.



5) Faggoting

An open stitch that joins two pieces of fabric together is another decorative touch. Use topstitching thread for this both above and in the bobbin for a heavier, hand-worked appearance. Try out a few different connecting stitch possibilities to find your favorite.

Press under the finished edges of two pieces of fabric. Pin these to an easily torn paper about 1/8" or so apart for uniform stitching. Instead of the paper you might also tape a rod of some sort (maybe a knitting needle) to your machine bed just short of where the needle comes down. This would also uniformly separate the two fabric edges as you stitch. This shell uses a napkin with a faggoted border all around.

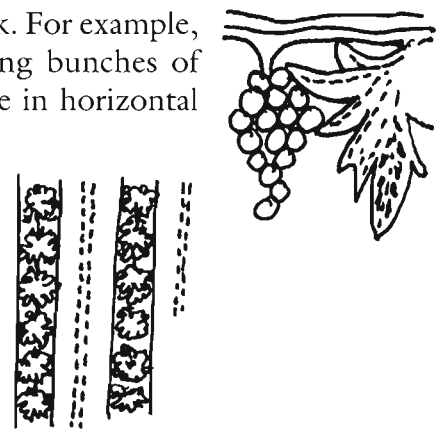


6) Commercial Lace Insets

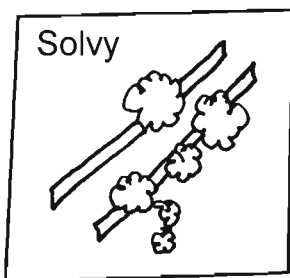


Where this might go depends on how your pieces look. For example, some lavish pieces are straight on one side, dangling bunches of grapes or falling leaves on the other edge. Use these in horizontal insets so the elaborate objects can freely move, almost three-dimensionally.

If this is a flat lace the strips could be vertical, perhaps interspersed with rows of twin needle pintucking. Many of these French-hand-sewing-by-machine techniques mentioned in the past few choices are perfect for shells.



7) Solvy Lace



Create your own free-motion lace between sheets of Sulky's Solvy, a clear water soluble stabilizer. Use for this project an 8" round hoop. Whatever thread you use on top of the machine, wind also on the bobbin as it **will** show. My project needed a variegated thread to blend with the flower colors.

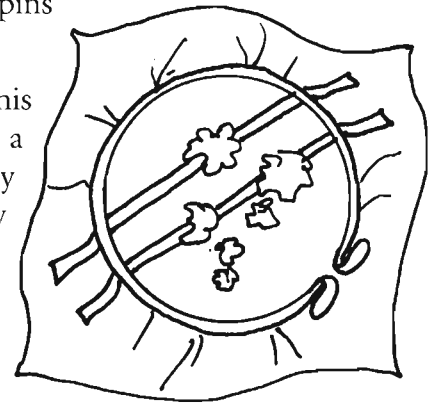
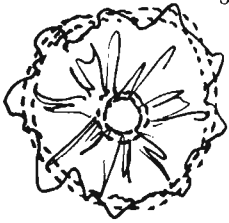
I started by cutting out little flowers from a printed chiffon fabric. I arranged these on two lengths of variegated ribbon about 10" in length. Place the whole arrangement on top of a sheet of Solvy.



Cover that with a second sheet of Solvy and put a few pins here and there to temporarily hold it in place.

Clamp this inside the hoop so the rings hold it all tautly. Remove any pins that interfere with the hoop.

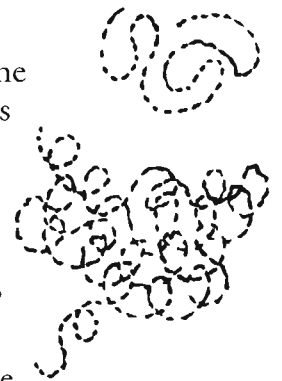
On your machine, drop the feed dog so it is no longer in operation as this will be free motion stitching. Use an embroidery or a darning foot and a straight stitch machine setting. Stitch fast, but move the hoop around slowly for this controls stitch length. Outline the flowers so they show prominently and are firmly held in place. After all flowers are securely set in place, the rest will be producing the surrounding lace. This is rather like stipple stitching *except* stipple stitching typically looks like this, not crossing itself as you stitch. You want to interlock this lace so it solidly holds together later, so *Do* cross your stitching lines everywhere.



This is very quick and it will only take a very few minutes to fill the hoop. Then unclamp it and move it out to any surrounding areas until you have built as big a lace piece as you want. The outer perimeter can be regular or a completely freeform irregular shape.

In a sink with warm water, swish your lace piece around until all the Solvy is dissolved. Carefully rinse it again, then smooth it out on the counter to dry. Press flat, then apply to shell.

Finish the shoulder and neck area but not side seams till later. Arrange your lace piece where you like it and pin in place. More free-motion stitching with the same thread, secure it to the shell all around and throughout, enlarging edges if you like.



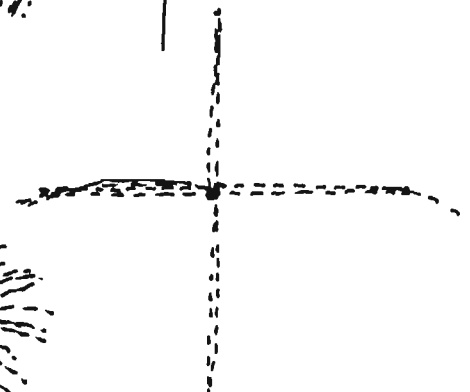
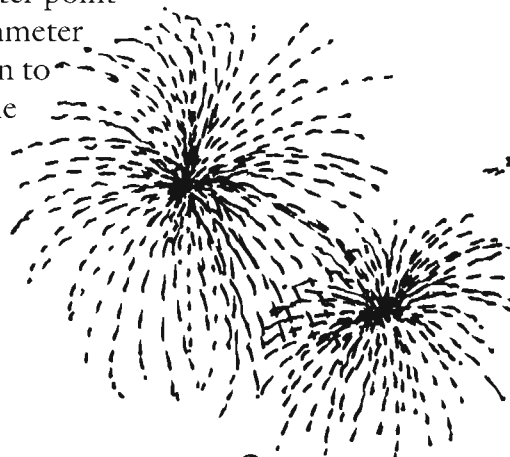
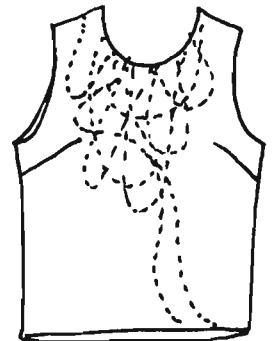
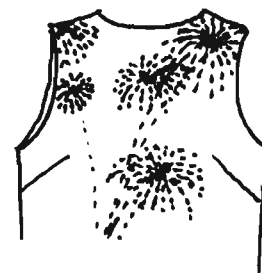
8) Random Metallic Stitching

Using a multipurpose presser foot, simply straight stitch a lot of curvy lines until you feel it is time to stop. Metallic thread is easier to manage with a Metafil or Metalica needle.

9) Fireworks

Done on a dressy fabric this might be just the answer for an evening top. Use metallic thread and put each “explosion” in a hoop to hold the fabric taut.

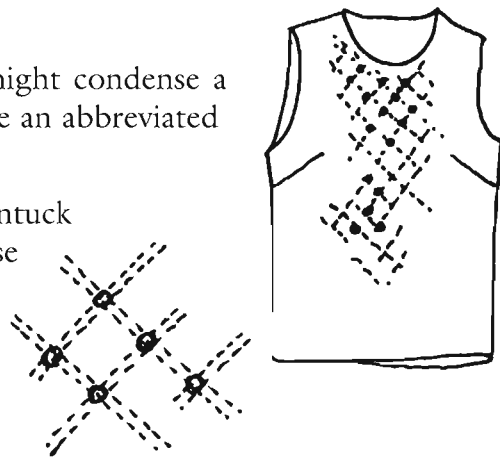
This will be free-motion stitching so lower the feed dog and use an embroidery foot. Start at a center point and stitch out as far as you want the diameter of the explosion to be and back in again to the center. Start with a cross to set the outer boundaries, then fill in all around the circle. These could be all the same color or perhaps each one different. Make some larger, some smaller, slightly overlap some.



10) Twin Needle Grid, Beaded

Cut the shell front slightly larger than the pattern because it might condense a little. Draw bias lines 1" apart going both directions. I chose to make an abbreviated section as shown.

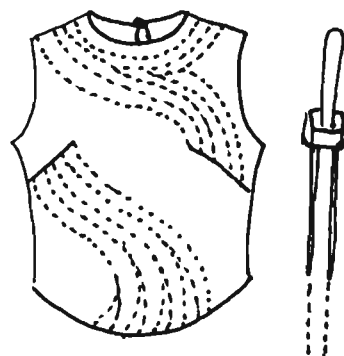
Insert a twin needle into the machine, 1.6mm width apart. Use a pintuck foot if you want the grooves to be more prominent, a multipurpose foot if not, but this also is dependent on the fabric hand. If your machine has an extra spool pin, use two spools of thread. If not, you might use both a bobbin and a spool on the same pin. Thread them through together but separate at the last guide before threading the two needles.



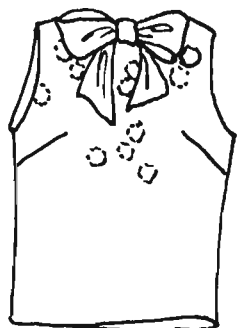
Stitch all the lines and see if it looks all right to back stitch at their ends. The alternative would be to pull all tails to the backside and tie knots, very time consuming so avoid it if possible. Sew little beads at some or all the joinings.

11) Twin Needle Pintucks

Using a 1.6mm double needle, this is very subtle embellishment, but quite striking. On a heavier fabric it produces a slight impression, and the fabric will not condense appreciably. A lighter weight will pull together deeper grooves. For this reason, cut the front slightly larger. After the stitching is done put the pattern back on and trim off excess.



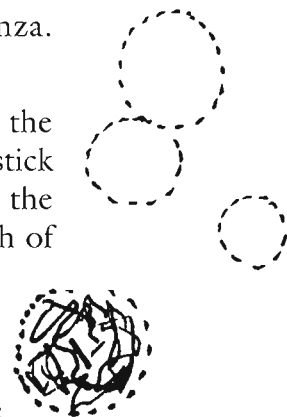
12) Dimensional Dots



I saw a very expensive fabric that seemed to be quarter size spots or dots of metallic fibers between two layers of organza. Duplicate almost anything if you figure out the how-to.

First Way: Cut several quarter or half dollar fabric shapes. On the lower fabric space them as you like them and use a dab of glue stick or smidgen of fusible web to hold them in place. Cover with the sheer fabric, pin here and there, and carefully stitch around each of them.

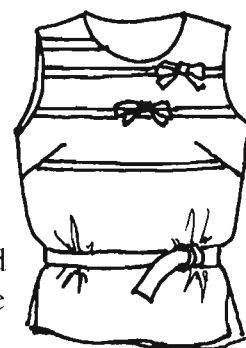
Second Way: Cut many of these circles from Post-It notes sticky area. Staystitch the two layers of the shell front together. Position the circles where you want. Stitch around each and remove the paper. From the back side cut little slits through the one layer only. Stuff this with lengths of metallic thread to fill the space and give it a little loft. Press a little fusible interfacing over the cut, or take a couple of hand stitches to hold it together.



The one pictured has had the front neck cut a little higher with a back opening buttoned at the neck. From the same sheer fabric, I made a scarf with a rolled hem edge all around, done on serger or sewing machine. At scarf center add a button loop to button on to the back button, holding it in place.

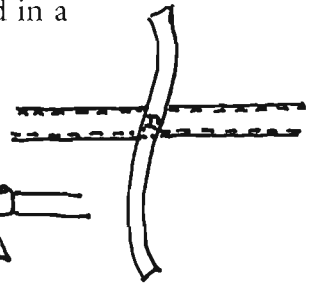
13) Ribbon Rows

I love fictionalized history shows like *Pride and Prejudice*. Ribbons were so important to those genteel girls. A variegated one about $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide exactly matched a leftover piece of fabric in my stash. Stitch this in rows either across the front only, or both front and back, perhaps in regular distances or maybe irregular spacing. Lay it down first to see

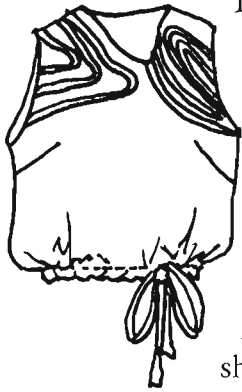


which you like best. Any extra ribbon? 8" - 12" lengths sew on vertically. When tied in a bow it comes out horizontally.

I just happened to have two plastic D rings exactly the same color as the fabric. Make a belt for an overblouse style shell.



14) Narrow Bias Tape or Ribbon Abstract

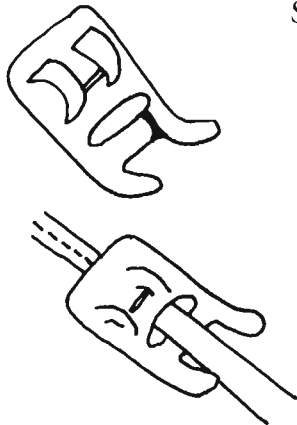


Purchase narrow bias tape in flat rolls in several colors and metallics. This creates interesting surface texture with a matching fabric. The type with fusible backing can save stitching - just pin in place and press. Try it out first to see if it stiffens the fabric too much.

Draw a design on your cut-out front with chalk pencil or air soluble marker. To attach the narrow bias or ribbon, look ahead to O and use that same foot. Because these are broader sweeping lines, you probably will not need to use a hoop. It might be helpful however, right where you turn a sharp curve, to put a sheet of tear-away stabilizer under just that area to keep everything flat. Tear away later.



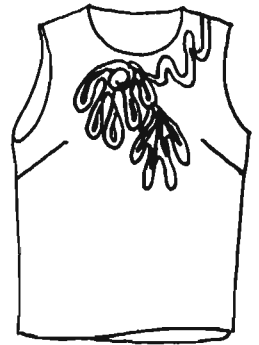
15) Bias Tube Swirls



Soft and sheer fabric like chiffon is perfect bias tube swirls. Cut several long strips of bias $1\frac{1}{4}$ " wide. Fold in half lengthwise and stitch a seam. Turn right side out with a Fasturn or other appropriate tool.

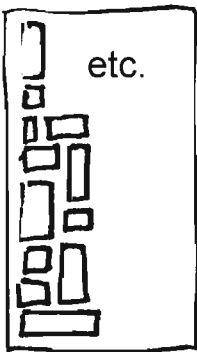
Draw a chalk pencil or air soluble marker design on your shell front. Use a foot that has an opening like this with a groove underneath through which your tube can pass. It will hold the tube beautifully in place while you stitch around curves or whatever design you follow.

For most fabrics, use a hoop to keep fabric taut.



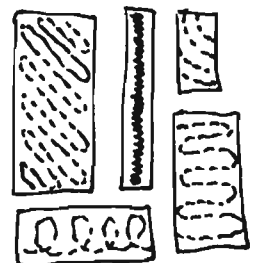
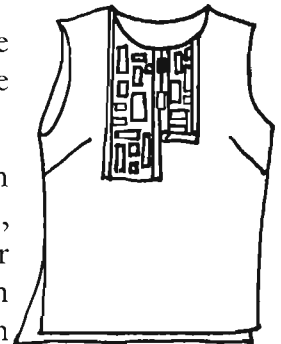
16) Klimt Panels

Gustav Klimt painted "The Kiss," in which the two subjects are wearing robes made of fascinating fabric. Produce your own Klimt fabric panels to attach to or become the fabric for the basic shell.



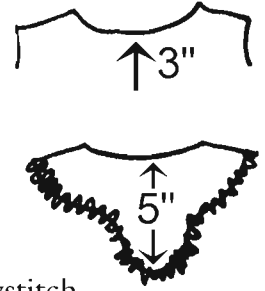
Any scraps of fabric will do: dupioni, kimono silk, prints or solids, chiffon etc. Press a medium or light fusible (like Wonder Under) to the backsides, then cut scraps into little squares and rectangles. Flip off the paper backs, arrange them on a sheer fabric (chiffon, organza or even something heavier) and press with a steam iron. Now randomly stitch over each piece with a variety of metallic or embroidery threads. I have two of these panels 11" x 3" and 14" x 4".

Cut more sheer panels, one to back each front panel, but 1" wider than each. Right sides together, stitch a $\frac{1}{8}$ " seam on each side. Turn right side out and press the edges. The backing fabric encloses the front raw edges sort of like binding them. Turn it wrong side out again and stitch across the bottom in a narrow seam. Turn right side out, press the bottom seam flat. Staystitch the top edges together on each panel.





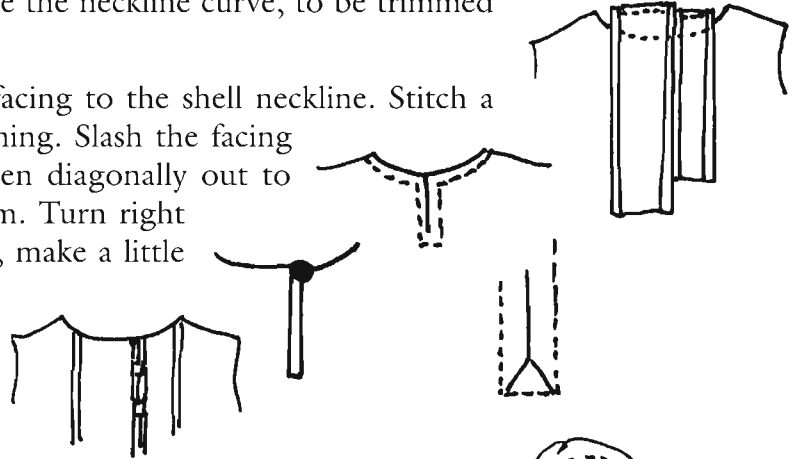
Cut the shell front neckline 3" higher than the pattern and $\frac{3}{4}$ " wider. This means it will only slide over your head with a back opening. At exactly the center back make a 3" slash.



Cut fitted facings duplicating the new neckline but at center back, about 5" or so deep to accommodate the opening. Interface facings and sew shoulders together, press open. Serge outer edge.

Pin the panels over the front neckline so they're straight and touching. Staystitch them to the neck edge. Tops will extend above the neckline curve, to be trimmed off evenly with shell edge.

Right sides together, pin then stitch the facing to the shell neckline. Stitch a narrow seam allowance around the back opening. Slash the facing layer open same as original back opening then diagonally out to stitched corners. Grade and clip neckline seam. Turn right side out and press. Sew a button on one side, make a little crocheted buttonloop on the other corner. In front you might want to sew a couple of buttons to hold panels down to shell front.



17) Geometric Melange

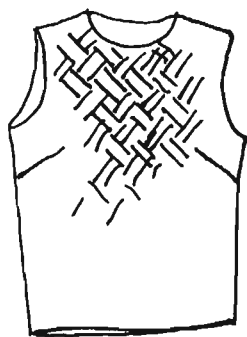
Go through all your scraps and find a handful of small pieces in the same color family. Warm colors of red, orange, gold, yellow, bronze, etc., give it a sunny flavor. Do you prefer the cooler blue, green, aqua, purple, lavender, and silvers?

Cut out your shell front and lay it on a padded board. Cut out 25 - 35 circles, squares, rectangles in small to medium sizes and arrange them on the shell upper front.

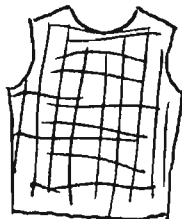
Do you want these raw edged pieces fused down completely or do you prefer casual treatment of loose edges that fray here and there. If tight, press WonderUnder to their backsides before cutting out. If loose, tuck a little Stitch Witchery under each and press for a slight hold. Glue stick would also hold them while you do the stitching next.

For thread, use embroidery rayon or acrylic in complimentary colors. On your squares and rectangles, stitch straight lines with standard foot, turning fabric as needed. On the circles, use an embroidery foot and dropped feed dog for free motion stitching.

18) Weaving Torn Strips

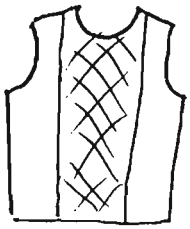


A shell of chiffon is comfortable and cool under a jacket, but I do not want it to be transparent! Cut a second piece of lining fabric, and staystitch the chiffon to it all around the outer edges plus a large basting stitch exactly through the center fold of each dart. Now you can easily treat them as one piece of fabric.



I had a ton of leftover chiffon strips in blues, greens, purples from other projects. Tear these in strips from $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide to 2" wide in an assortment of colors and widths and weave them into a plaid. If the strips are long enough, cover the entire front. If shorter, only

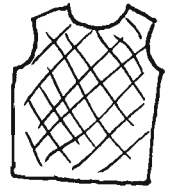




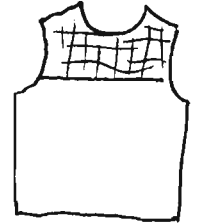
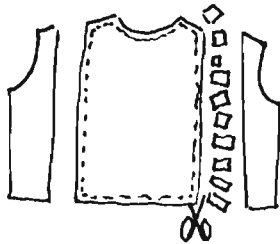
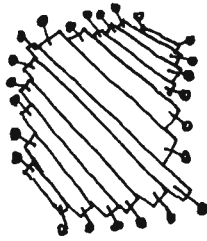
make a panel of the weaving to attach to solid fabric around the edges.

To back the weaving, determine what size it will be and cut a thin fusible interfacing that size and shape. Put it on a padded board, fusible side up.

Cover it in one direction with an assortment of the strips, side by side, pinning each end through the interfacing and into the padding. To weave, attach a big safety pin to the end of a strip. Do a simple over-under-over-under weave as you pull the strip along with the pin. Repeat this until the whole interfacing piece is covered. Steam press to create a solid fabric as whatever touches the interfacing sticks to it. Remove pins and staystitch all around the edge. Turn it over and trim off all the excess strip ends even with interfacing edges.



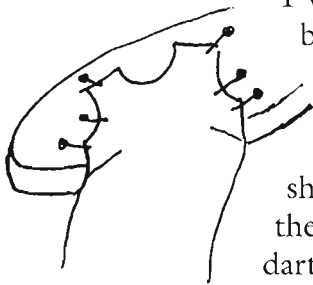
shorter strips use in corners



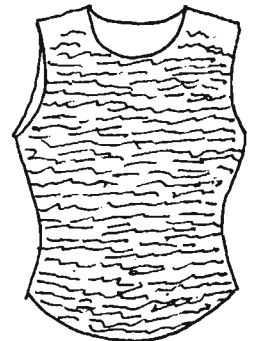
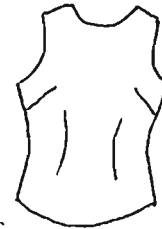
Torn edges of the chiffon fray a little which can add a lovely softness. Stitch the shell together and finish as you like.

19) Wrinkled Chiffon or Sheer

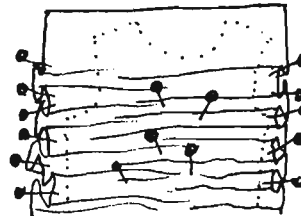
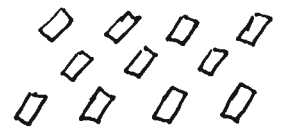
Make this process easier with fusible double faced clear tape (like Steam-A-Seam II). When pressed it becomes permanent.



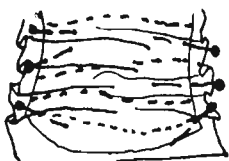
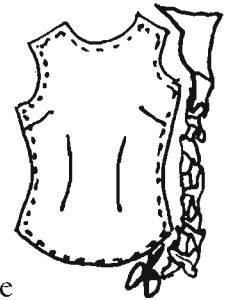
I wanted mine shaped at the waist as well as the bust dart as it is to be an overblouse. Start by cutting out the front and back in a lining fabric. Stitch the usual bust dart. I also stitched in a little shaping in waistline darts, but not too shapely since it has to pull over your bust. None of these darts will show in the crinkled chiffon on top. Because this won't lie flat with the darts, assemble this on your ironing board only one part at a time. As shown, start at the top, above your bust where it *will* lie flat. Pin it out at the edges to your padded board so it stays relatively taut.



Stick little pieces of your fusible double faced clear tape all over the shell surface, about 2" apart. The sheer fabric piece should be slightly wider than your shell base, and at least twice as long. Lay the sheer on top of your taped base and in the shoulder area, just let it be flat. When you get down as far as the neckline, start making little horizontal pleats. These won't be even and won't even go all the way across in straight lines. The point is to just get a lot of little wrinkles which you push down to stick to the tape. Feel free to hold them down out at the edges with a multitude of pins.



Use more pins throughout to temporarily hold. When you like the result, touch the iron tip here and there to hold somewhat until you can remove all the interior pins, leaving the row of side pins in place. Steam press, remove all pins, move the shell up on the ironing board to do another section, etc. When the whole top is wrinkled and fused in place, turn it over and cut off all excess fabric. Staystitch around the edge.



I used a different technique on the back. Starting near the bottom I stitched a curvy line, no tape use. Scrunch a little fabric downward and stitch a different wavy horizontal line. Use pins to help you make the fabric baggy between each stitching line. When you have

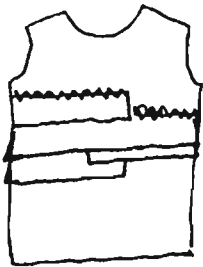
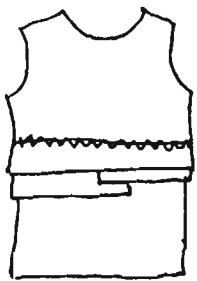
it all covered, put it on the ironing board and rub the iron from top toward bottom. This turns the “bags” into uneven little pleats and tucks. Again staystitch, trim off excess fabric and construct the shell. Either way, stitching or taping works well and I like the results of both.

20) Chiffon Shingles

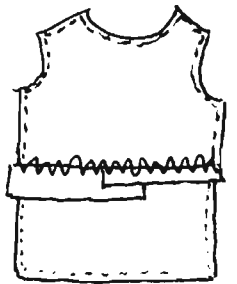
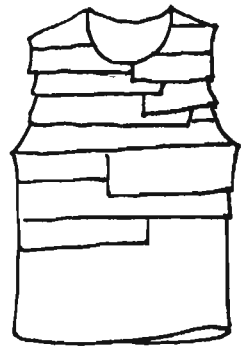
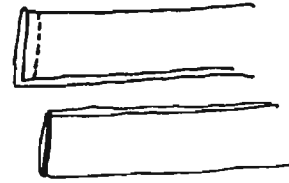
I recently watched the process in fascination as a neighbor had their roof re-shingled. Everything turns into fabric in my mind and I couldn't wait to follow suit on a shell.

The perfect shingles consisted of scraps in various shades of green and aqua. First, staystitch a sheer layer to lining layer and stitch the darts, treating the layers as one piece of fabric. Leave the back plain with only these two layers, no shingles.

Rectangular shingle sizes are from 6" wide down to 2" wide and every where in between. Their length going across varied from 7" for the shortest to the whole expanse for the longest. Any that will only go part way across the front, fold in half and stitch a narrow seam on one end. Turn it right side out and press flat.



If tucking in this shell, leave the lower part plain up to the waist. Start nailing down your shingles. Open side upward, lay a shingle down and zigzag its raw edges down to the shell. Maybe finish out the line with a narrower one, as the variety of sizes makes it more interesting. Slightly overlap it as you move on up with another and zigzag. Keep building upward until the whole front is covered. Staystitch outer edges, trim off excess ends, finish up the shell.



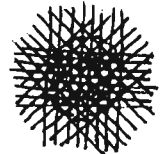
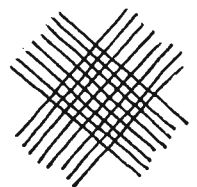
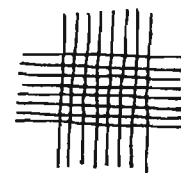
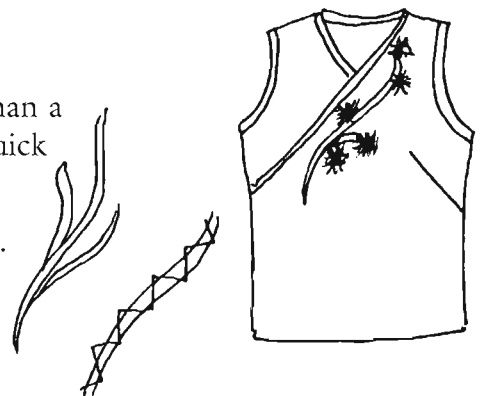
21) Fringed Flowers

When some fabrics ravel so beautifully, consider it an asset rather than a liability and take advantage of it. Linen is such a fabric and this is a quick embellishment.

On your shell front lay a piece of yarn in an off-center slightly curvy line. Couch it in place with matching thread. Couching is zigzagging over it to affix it to the fabric. Make sure the fiber content of the yarn won't shrink when washed.

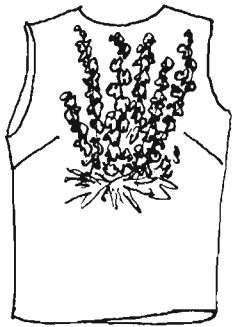
Cut squares of the flowers-to-be fabric. You need two for each flower. The smallest ones might be 1", the largest $2\frac{1}{2}$ ". Ravel about one-third off all four sides of each square so that only about one-third remains as solid fabric in the center, fringe on all four sides, corners blank. For a flower put one down on the straight. Cover with a second ravelled square placed on the diagonal.

Feed dog down, straight stitch setting, embroidery or darning foot used, stitch round and round on the solid center. The finished effect is a perfectly round fringe surrounding your stitching. You might consider sewing a bunch of seed beads on top of the centers.

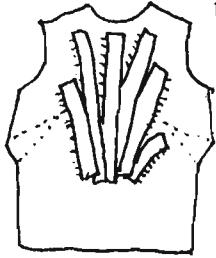


22) Delphinium Stalks

Everyone can be an artist on the sewing machine, which is one of the many reasons we love to sew. This technique involves sheer fabric such as chiffon because you do want to see through it.

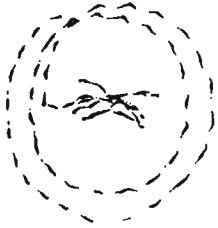


Cut out lining as a base fabric in a color you like under the sheer. Tear or cut 5 or 6 fabric strips in red, purple, blue or other delphinium colors. These should be about $1 - 1\frac{1}{2}$ " wide and 8" - 12" long. Arrange them in a group on the shell lining front and hold in place with a few little dabs of glue stick, fusible web or whatever. Cover with the sheer layer, pin and staystitch around the edge. Baste a line through each dart center to hold in place temporarily.



Hoop one section of the garden, thread the machine with the same color thread as the strip you plan to stitch first.

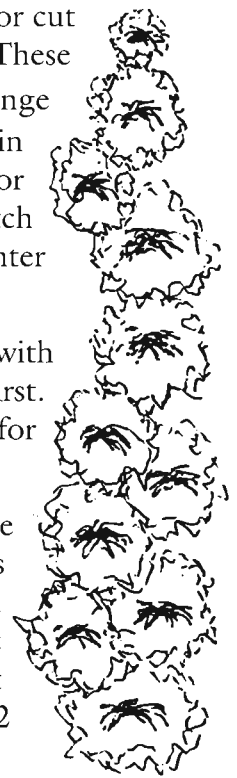
Put on an embroidery foot, set on straight stitch, drop the feed dog for free-motion stitching. You're ready to plant a garden.



Start at either the top or the bottom of a stalk. Typically flowers are larger at the bottom, smaller toward the top, so keep this in mind as you stitch. Move the hoop around in a small circle twice, then back and forth several times at the center and move on to the next floret. These look very realistic if you circle in shaky motions so it produces ruffley petals. Without lifting the presser foot just keep stitching into the next flower. It takes perhaps 10 minutes to do each stalk; 10-12 flowers per stalk.

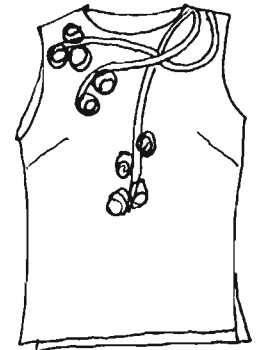


Remember it is quicker to move the hoop to another area than to change the thread color. The most efficient way is therefore to stitch everything pink, then all the purple, etc. When all the stalks are finished, add a clump of green leaves at the bottom done the same way, free-motion line drawings.

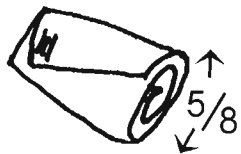


23) Branch of Spring Buds

These origami flowers are luscious in three dimensions and pastel colors, you need to try them. *For more origami instructions, goto <http://www.sewingconnection.com/hydrangea.html>.* Start out with some narrow bias cut fabric tubes. Cut these $1\frac{1}{4}$ " wide and 12" long of some supple fabric. Fold in half lengthwise and stitch. Turn right side out with a Fasturn or whatever tool you have for that purpose. Arrange them, slightly intertwining, in an attractive curvy placement.



Hold in place with pins until you can invisibly stitch them down by hand from underneath.

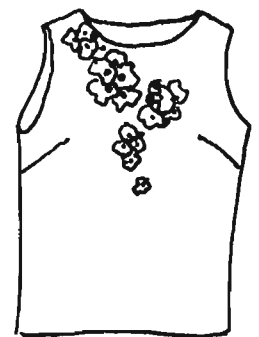


To make the flowers, 7 - 10 of them - use the 1" dyed silk ribbon that is in variegated colors. This is the type that is cut on the bias with singed edges. Cut a 5" length and fold it round and round about $\frac{5}{8}$ " wide. Take a couple of stitches using a doubled thread through the whole roll at one end and tie a knot to hold together. Over a little scissors's point, turn it inside out. With only a couple of hand stitches, sew it close to a stem end, grouping a few here and there. Slightly peel back the outer layer to expose more.



24) Singed Silk Flowers

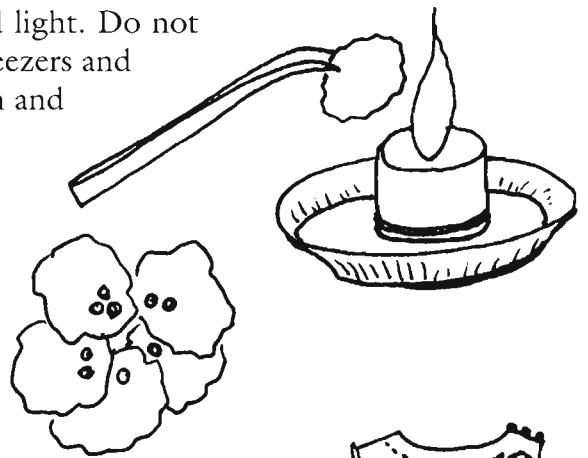
Those singed silk ribbons make lovely flat petaled flowers. Cut somewhat round circles from it, about 5 or 6 per flower. You need to singe the edges all around but take advantage of the fact that the ribbon sides are already burnt. You will only have to singe the curved ends.



For this set a low fat candle in the center of a foil pie plate and light. Do not hold the edge directly in the flame, hold the petal with long tweezers and approach the flame slowly. The silk edge will singe slightly. Turn and repeat on other end.

Lay it on a paper towel and with another towel layer, rub excess carbon off the silk edge. Not only is the effect lovely, but the singeing prevents raveling.

Arrange 4-5 of these petals together on your shell front. Sew on a few little beads to anchor the petals.



25) Leaves of Organza

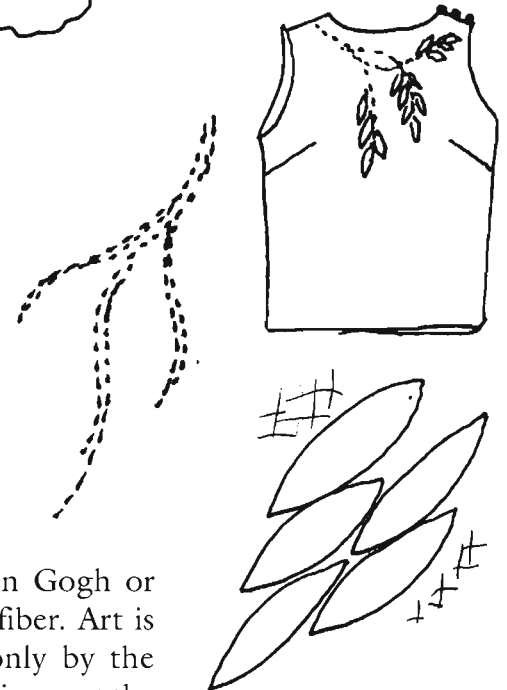
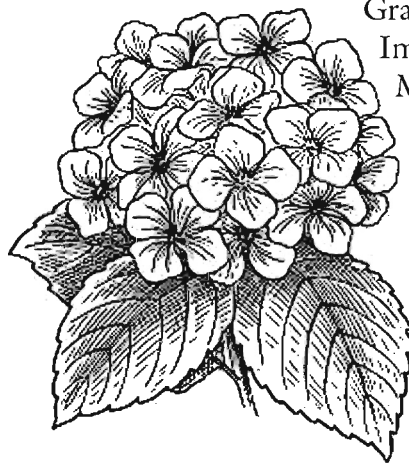
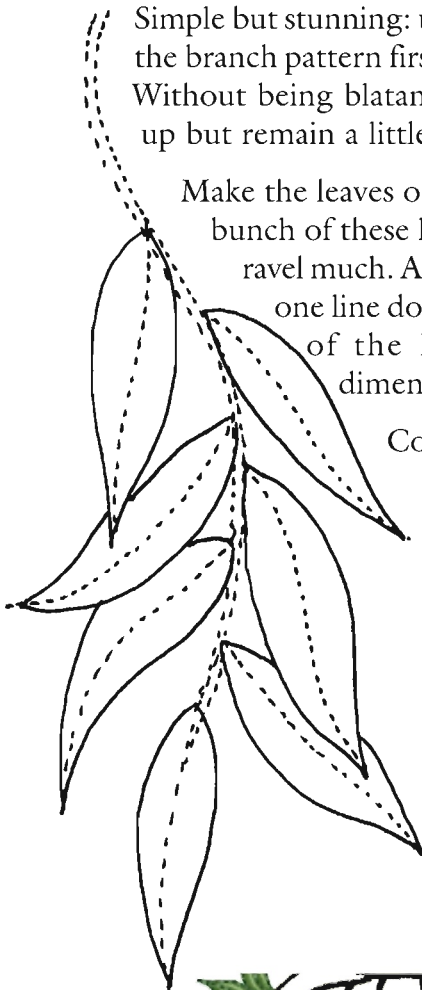
Simple but stunning: use metallic thread to sew a branch. Mark the branch pattern first with chalk pencil or air soluble marker. Without being blatant, a few lines of straight stitching show up but remain a little subtle.

Make the leaves of a sheer, crisp fabric like organza. Cut a bunch of these long slim ones on the bias so they won't ravel much. Arrange them along branch ends and stitch one line down each for a center vein. The side edges of the leaves curl up slightly for a three dimensional effect.

Consider creating wisteria or honeysuckle.

Grape vines?

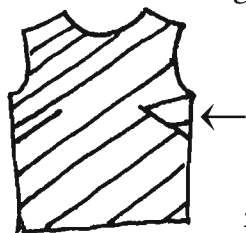
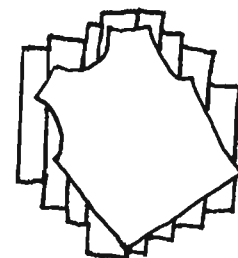
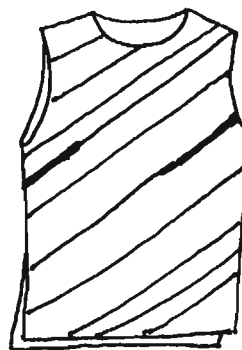
Imagine Van Gogh or Monet in fiber. Art is limited only by the imagination, not the medium.



26) Zebra

At least swirled stripes... I saw a multi-hundred dollar formal in a magazine. It really caught my eye but I haven't any black tie affairs scheduled in the foreseeable future. Why not translate the idea into a shell that will get much more wear? The bonus here is that it will take just a bit of several fabrics. Because of the combination of fabrics, it can go under several different jackets.

Try in dupioni or linen. Leftover combinations of cotton quilting fabrics intersperse with solid colors. Stitch the pieces together on the straight grain, then turn it diagonally to cut out the shell.

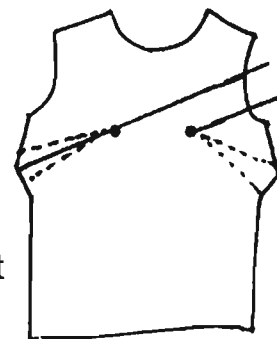


The right dart fits in with the diagonal stripes, but the left dart that cuts across them, leaves broken, distorted lines. Let's move the left dart elsewhere so it blends in.

Step one, make an entire front paper pattern instead of the one that just comes to the center front to be cut on the fold. The whole front is necessary to leave one dart alone, manipulating the other.

Notice how the darts point right to the bust apex but stop slightly short of it. Wherever your new dart will be sewn, slash one line all the way to the point. Because the diagonal stripes will blend the right dart in, the left dart needs to be moved so it's on a parallel line. This means it will come out in the armscye.

Draw a line from left apex out and slash it. Fold out the original left dart and the armscye one automatically opens the same shape. Cut out one layer of your new front on the striped fabric and it will look great. Did I say 26? For all the embroiderers, we better mention this source of endless possibilities.



Memory Card Fun - Those of you with embroidery machines can use memory cards or download designs of every description. I'll only use one example here because the other 26 decorative shells can be done on any machine. A small garment like this is certainly perfect for so much of the embroidery capabilities you may have. I am making this for a special reason. In another program, I create a new look for the "Orient Express." Of course, I need a shell to wear under one of the kimonos and this shimmery dressy one popped into my mind.

I won't elaborate as the possibilities are as varied as the equipment available to produce it. I will leave it to you for fascinating explorations on your own.



Consider these shells....

