

VELVET PANSIES

CQ Lessons & Challenge #8

Carolyn DecPainter

In the Victorian era, social custom dictated that a lady show modesty in the affairs of the heart, therefore, when she wanted to show her interest in a particular gentleman, she would rely on the language of flowers to convey her message. For example, a white rose means innocence, virtue, and purity, while a red rose means true love. In the language of flowers, the pansy means, “fond thoughts,” or, “I’m thinking of you...” To get the message across, the lady might wear a pansy in her hair, or she might carry pansies in a small bouquet called a “tussie mussie.” Unfortunately, ladies didn’t carry tussie mussies just for flirting, they were also used as a substitute for deodorant...

Like most of you, I love pansies! I love their velvety soft petals, and their nearly limitless colors, but mostly I love their upturned little faces, always ready to greet us with their sweet smiles. All of our present-day hybrid pansies owe their beginnings to the modest little viola, shown a little later in this lesson.



Photos #1 and #2 Pansy Chest painted by Carolyn (DecPainter)

This small chest was a commissioned piece painted for the Decorative Arts Collection of the Society of Decorative Painters in Wichita, Kansas.



Photo #2



Photo #3, Pansy painted on dupioni silk, ready to be sewn into a CQ block.



Photos #4, #5, and #6 are just a few examples of the wide variety of pansy colors.



Photo #5



Photo #6

VELVET PANSY INSTRUCTIONS

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

Fabrics:

Velvet: Will fray, but it makes a gorgeous pansy. Use Fray Check on fabric edges.

Velveteen: Great choice. Use Fray Check, or just take slightly larger bites of fabric with your needle.

Ultrasuede: Another great choice, as the knit backing keeps the edges from fraying.

Felted wool: Use thinner, lighter weight felted wool. Usually won't fray.

Interfacing:

When I first started making the velvet pansies, which are similar to, and were inspired by, those in Judith Montano's book, *Elegant Stitches*, I tried nearly every iron-on interfacing I could find, but I had trouble pulling the needle through the fabric and interfacing. Since I've been using the John James chenille needles, I have been able to use a very lightweight, woven or non-woven Pellon, and have had little problem pulling the needle through. The difference, I think, is because the eye and the shaft of the John James needles are a uniform size from top until just before it narrows down to the tip. Other chenille needles I've tried have a large eye, and a more slender shaft, making it difficult to pull the eye and thread through the fabric. The John James needles seem to me to have a sharper point, as well.

CAUTION, CAUTION: DO NOT TRY TO USE IRON-ON INTERFACING ON VELVET AS THE HEAT OF THE IRON WILL CRUSH AND DAMAGE THE NAP.

Fray Check:

A fast drying fabric glue that keeps fabric edges from fraying. Apply to the edges with a toothpick to avoid liquid glue wicking too far into fabric. It makes the edge of the fabric quite stiff, making it easier to work the buttonhole stitches.

Needles:

Sizes #22, #24, or #26 chenille needles. Again, I highly recommend John James chenille needles, available from www.ColonialNeedle.com Item #JJ188. The larger the number of the needle, the smaller it's size. While you're at the website, get yourself some John James "straw needles," too, as they are perfect for making bullion and cast-on stitches, which will be featured in an upcoming lesson.

Thread:

Cotton embroidery floss: Use three strands of floss for your buttonhole stitches, and one strand for making the straight stitches at the bases of the three front petals.

Perle cotton: size #5 or #8. Use one strand for buttonhole stitches.

Silk buttonhole twist: One strand.

Rayon embroidery floss: Two or three strands.

Rubber disc needle-puller: Optional, but helpful when pulling needles through thick layers of fabric.

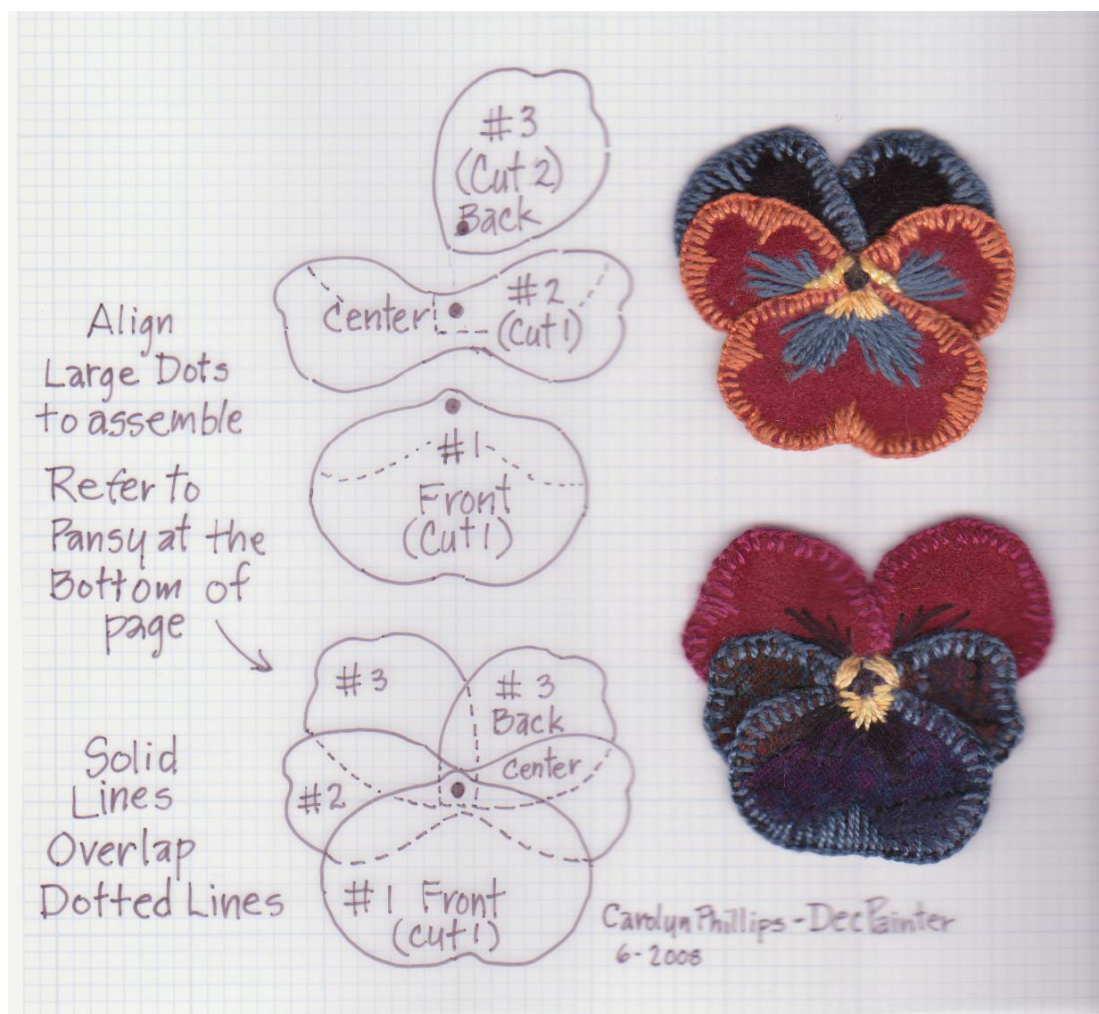


Illustration #1

The pattern above will make pansies that are about 2 1/2" x 2 1/2"

Please feel free to reduce or enlarge the pattern as desired.



Photo #7 The lower (purple petals) of the pansy above left are made with ultrasuede, and were buttonhole stitched with three strands of cotton embroidery floss, while the upper (gold) petals, which are made from velveteen, were worked in gold variegated #5 perle cotton. The petals on the pansy above right are embroidered with #5 perle cotton. The upper petals are made with a beautiful black velvet. Use rayon floss or silk buttonhole twist for a particularly beautiful look.

Silk buttonhole twist is available at Threadart.com, as well as at Ribbonsmyth.com

BEFORE THE PANSY IS ASSEMBLED:

Work a buttonhole stitch around the perimeter of each petal, notice that you won't need to embroider the buttonhole/blanket stitch on the part that will lie under another petal(s). This helps eliminate some of the bulk. Please note the areas where the buttonhole stitches are longer and/or shorter. This adds a little interest to the edges of the petals, giving the impression that they are more curved.

The straight stitches at the base of each of the three front petals are usually worked in black, but can be done in the blue, as shown in the pansy above right. These straight stitches can be worked in any color that will show up on the petals.

ASSEMBLING THE PANSY:

To assemble the pansy, slightly overlap the two #3 petals, and tack them together through the black dots. Don't cut the thread. Bring the needle from the back of the #2 center section through the black dot. Move the needle over slightly and push it back through to the back of the #2 petal. Take a few stitches back and forth to fasten the pieces snugly. Don't cut the thread. Bring the thread through to

the front of petal #1, matching the black dots. Tack in place as before. Referring to the pansy in photo #7, arrange the petals and invisibly tack them in place where necessary to stabilize the petals. Try to leave the outer edges of the petals loose so they will be a little bit floppy, and will look more natural.

The “mouth,” at the center of the pansy can be satin stitched in black, or can remain the underlying fabric color. The pansy’s yellow moustache looks like two small commas, or parentheses, and can be embroidered in small satin stitches, or in two small *bullion stitches (which look great!), making the upper part of the comma wider and then tapering it to a point at the bottom end. The pansy’s yellow “lower lip” is worked in a slightly fanned-out straight stitch.

*Mary Corbet has a wonderful video for making bullion stitch rosebuds that would be helpful if you want to learn the bullion stitch (for the pansy’s moustache). Here is the link to the video:
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3038363125610408846>



Photo #8. The pansy in this picture is worked in “long and short stitch,” which is a cousin to satin stitch. This filled-in stitch is described on page 32 of Judith Montano’s book, *Elegant Stitches*, as well as in many other embroidery books, including Helen Stevens’ book, *Embroiderer’s Year*, which is available at JoAnn, etc., fabric stores and, I believe, at Joann.com. In her books, Helen Stevens refers to the stitch as *opus plumarium*. Her books are quite beautiful, and very inspirational .

J. Marsha Michler, in her book, *The Magic of Crazy Quilting*, also describes the uses of the long and short stitch.

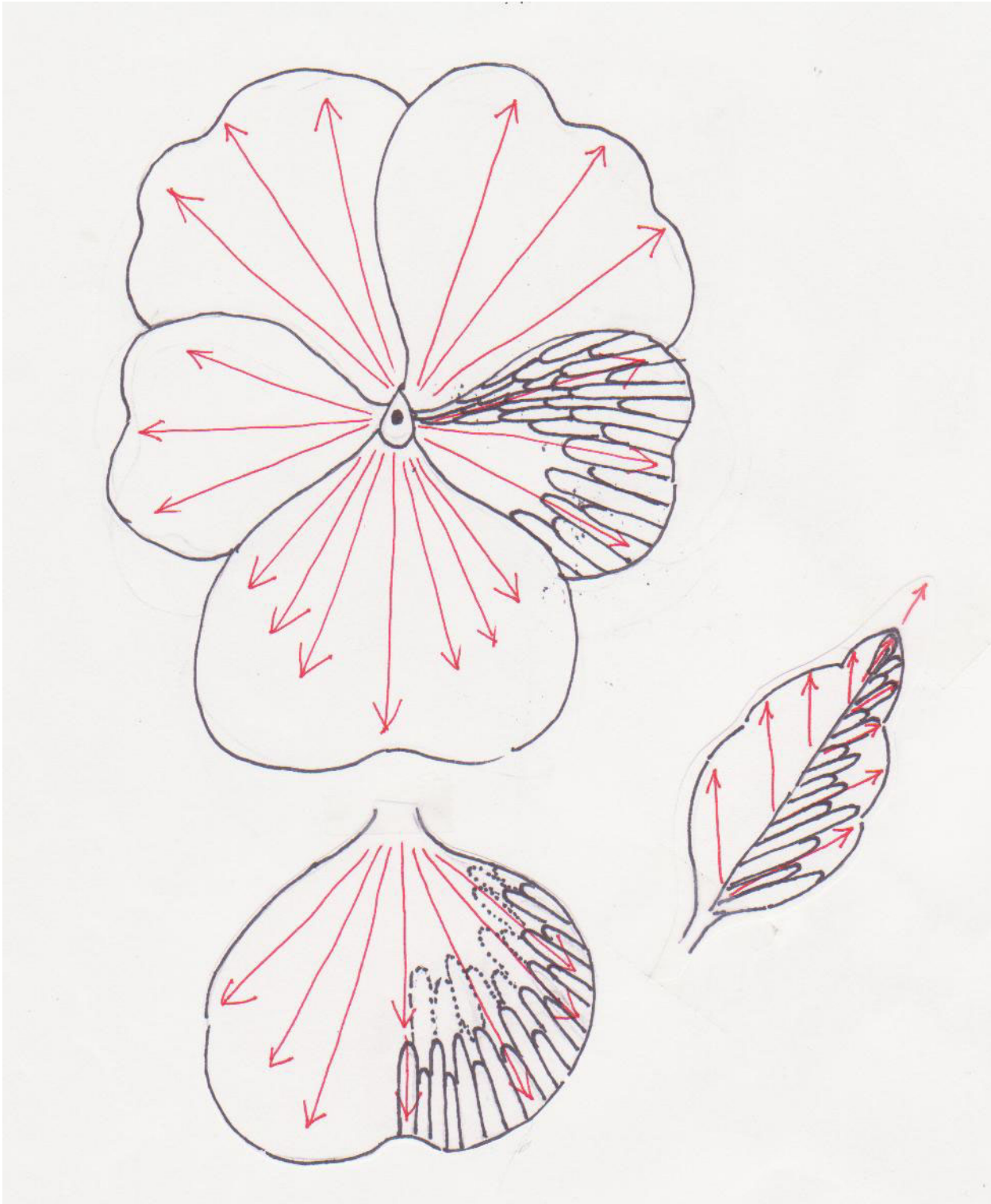


Illustration #2

It is recommended that, before beginning the long and short stitches, the flower be outline stitched, or backstitched. The long and short stitches will extend over the outline stitches, giving a more defined

edge to the petal. Long and short stitches are worked along the natural grain line of the petals and leaves, as shown by the red arrows, Illustration #2. Begin the long and short stitches at the outer edge of the petals, working toward the center hole at the middle of the flower. Leaves are worked in the same way, from the edge toward the center vein line. Please refer to the directions for both the pansy and the violet for suggestions for working the opening, “mouth,” in the center of the flower.

The pansy pattern below can be outline stitched in stem stitch, back stitch, or can be worked in long and short (filled-in) stitches, as shown, in both photo #8 and illustration #2. You could also use the pansies individually, depending on the size of your design area. The little bee can be used individually, also, and would be cute tucked into some smaller areas.



Illustration #3 “Basket of Pansies,” by Carolyn (DecPainter) Reduce or enlarge pattern as desired.

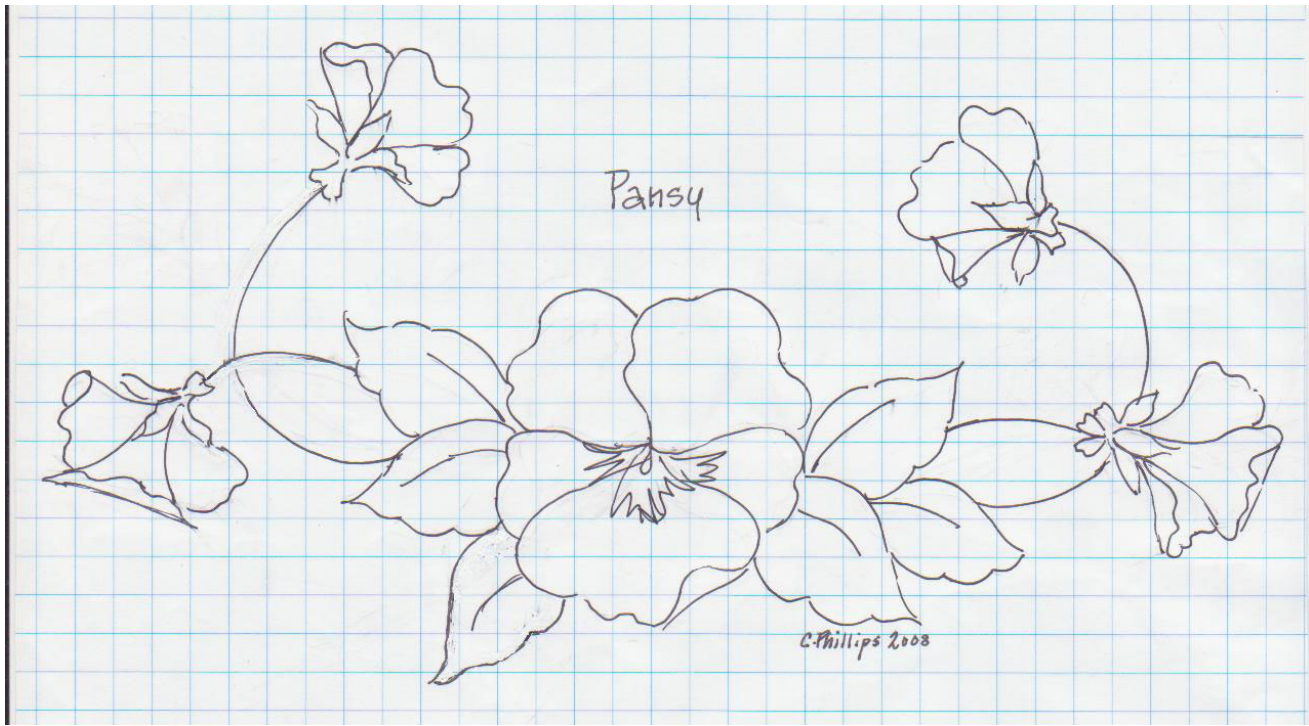


Illustration #4 “Pansy Motif” Reduce or enlarge as desired. Pattern can be outline stitched in stem stitch, back stitch, or can be worked in long and short (filled-in) stitches, as shown in photo#8.

VIOLAS/VIOLETS

These small charmers are the mothers of our modern-day pansies. Violas are generally larger than the typical violets, like the ones below right.



Photo #9, Viola/Violet AKA: Heartsease, Johnny Jump-Up, Love in Idleness, etc.



Photo #10, Field Violet



Photo #11 Violet or viola, AKA: Johnny Jump-Up, heartsease, and Love-in-a-

mist.

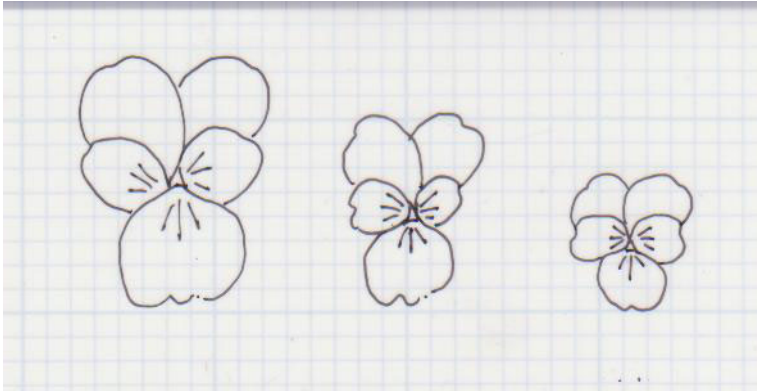
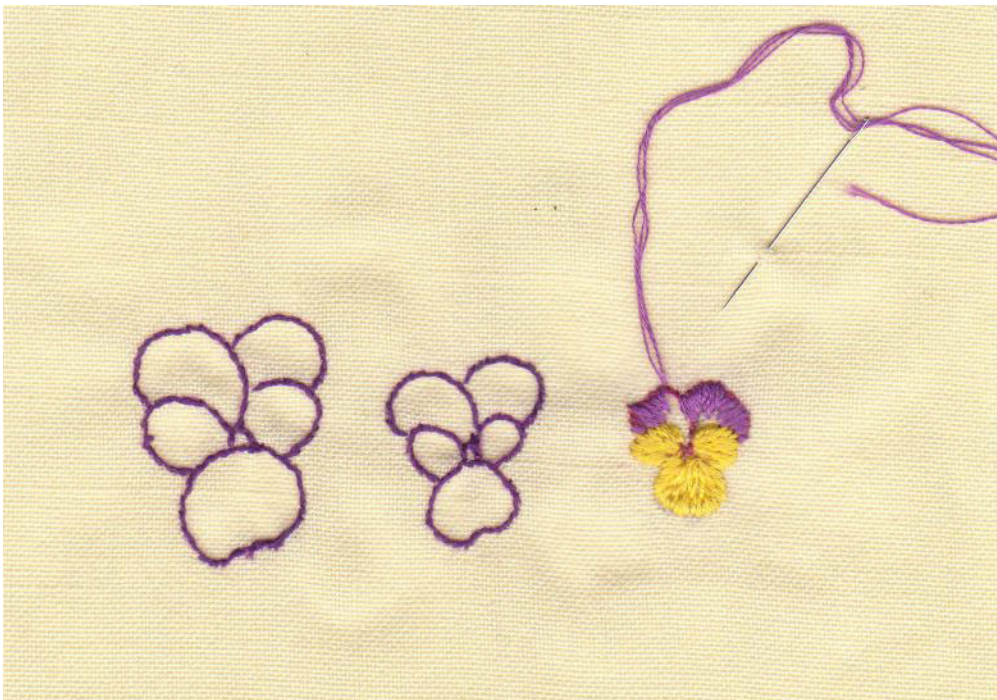


Illustration #5 the pattern, above, can be used in outline embroidery, as well as for filled-in long and short stitch. As you can see by the background grid, the first viola is about 1 1/2" tall, the second is about 1" tall, and the last is a life-sized, 3/4" violet.



It is generally recommended that, before beginning the long and short stitching, the flower should be outline stitched. Long and short stitches extend over the outline stitches, giving a more defined edge to the petal. Long and short stitches are worked from the outer edge of the petals in toward the center hole of the pansy. The bases of the two upper (purple) petals will have some darker purple shading. Please refer to illustration #2 to see the red directional lines that show the grain line of the petals.



Illustration #6 the leaf on the left, above, is an immature violet leaf. The larger, 2" leaf, shown above right, is an average-sized violet leaf. Compare the leaf size to the tiny 3/4" tall violet! In illustration #2, compare the tiny size of the pansy leaf with the large pansy flower! See if you can figure out the direction of the grain lines in the above leaves. **Hint:** Look at the most obvious vein lines, ignoring all the smaller auxiliary veins. The smaller leaf at the left gives you a better picture of the vein lines. The leaves can be outline stitched, back stitched, or can be worked in long and short stitch.



Photo #12



Photo #13

In photo #13, the violet's "moustache" is done in bullion stitches/knots in yellow cotton embroidery floss. The lower "lip" is worked in short yellow, slightly fanned out, straight stitches. Note, also, the black straight-stitches at the base of each of the front three petals.

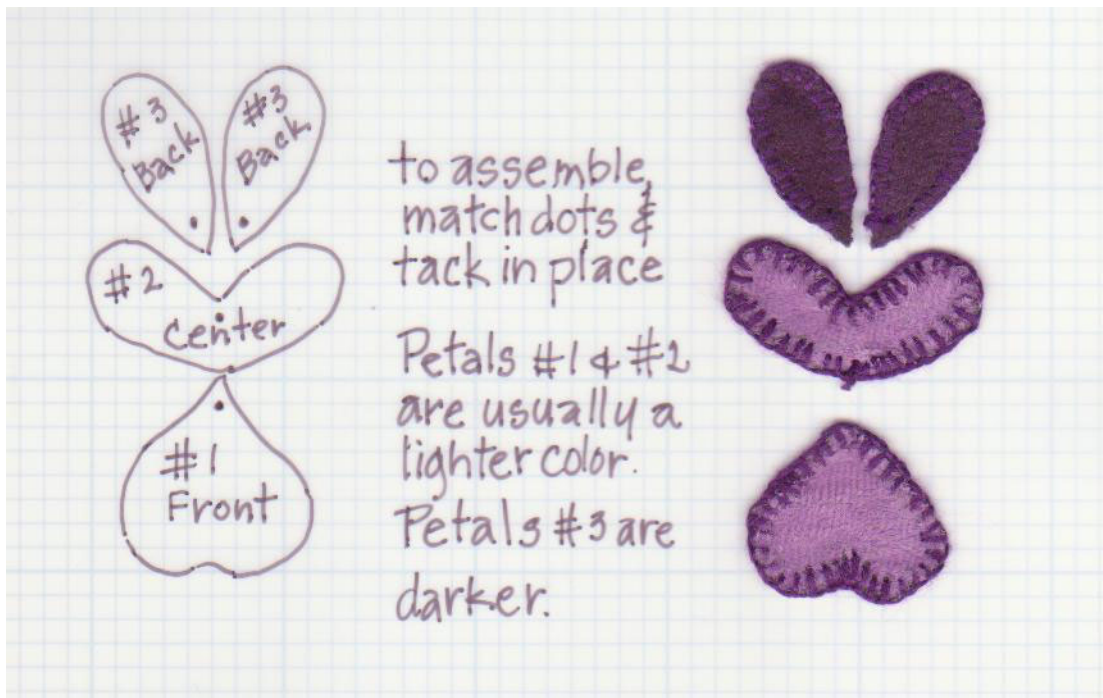


Illustration #7 Pattern and assembly directions. The pattern, above, makes approximately 1 1/2" violas. Because of the smaller size of the petals, these are a little more difficult to work the buttonhole stitches, but, hopefully, they will be worth the extra work.

SILK RIBBON PANSY

This is the little pansy I came up with after some of the girls asked for a "real looking" silk ribbon pansy. I sat down with needle, thread, 13mm (about 1/2") silk ribbon, pencil and gridded paper (which I don't seem able to live without!) and the result is this somewhat time-consuming, but fairly simple little pansy. Although, I should let you be the judge of its simplicity...

It will probably take you longer to read the instructions than it will to actually make the pansies. After you figure out how to making the pansy, you will be able to spend less time on it.

Since the three front petals of the pansy are generally one color, and the two petals in back are a different color, you'll need two different colors of ribbon. The front three petals will require about 7" of ribbon (mine is yellow), and the two back petals (purple) will need about 5".

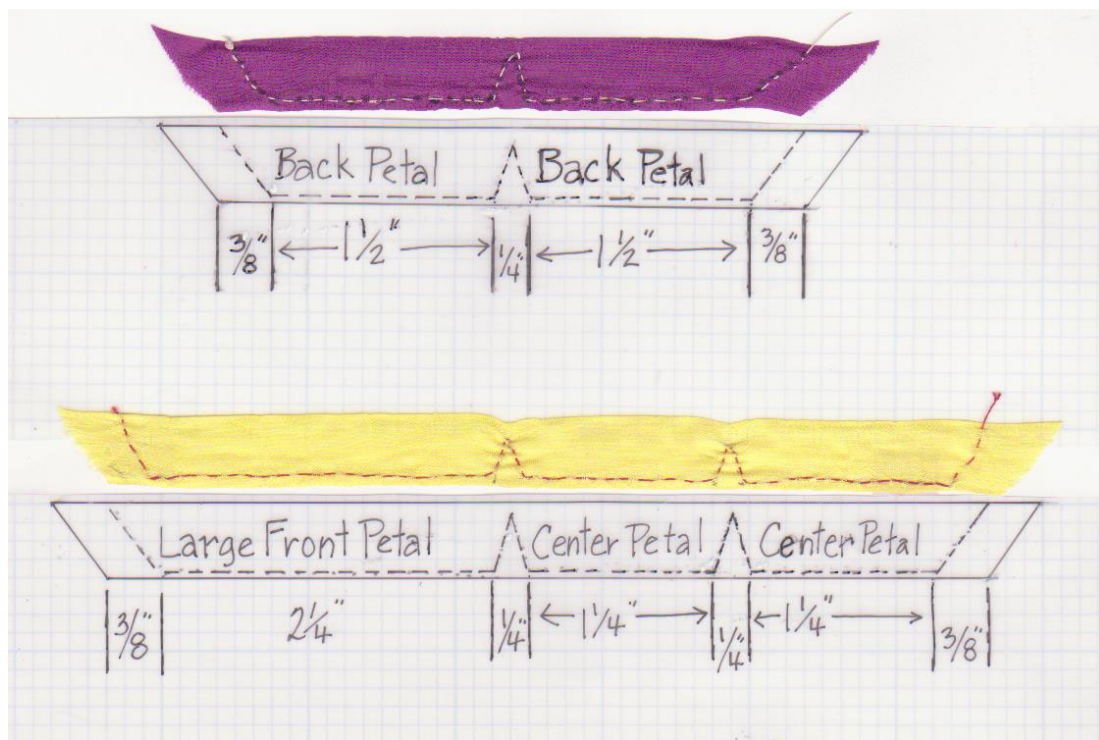


Illustration #8

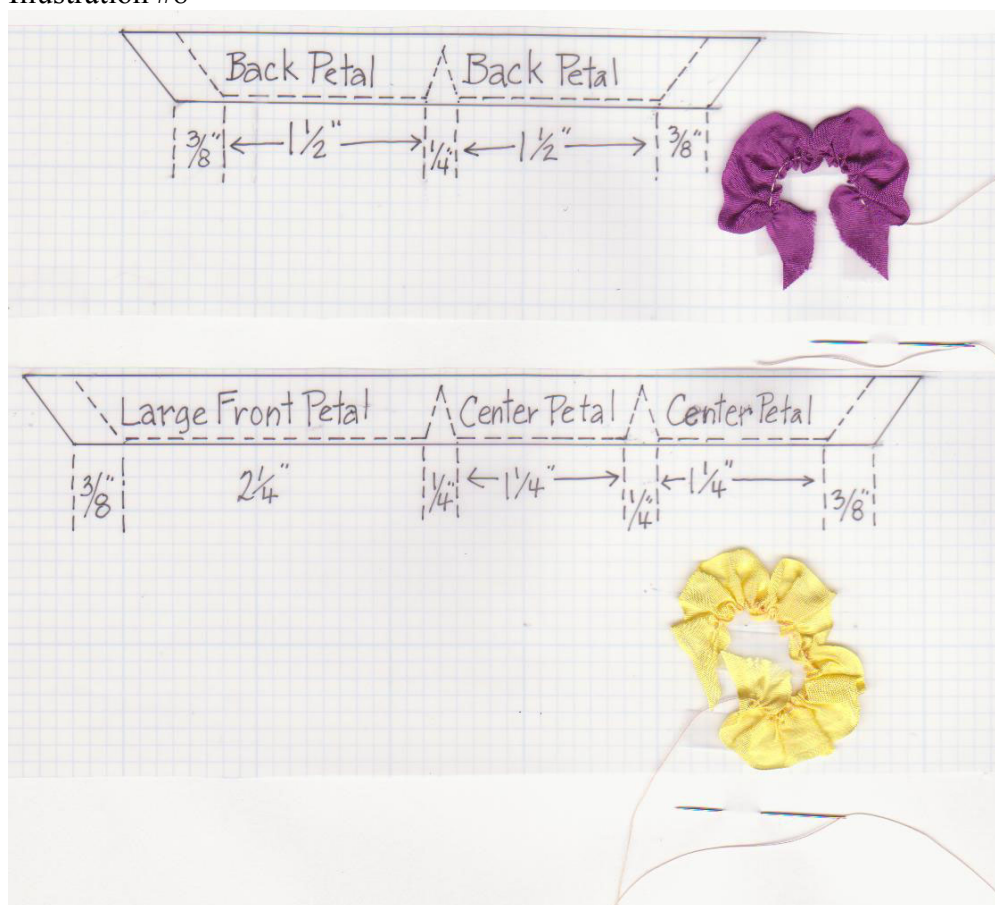


Illustration #9

THE TWO BACK (purple) PETALS:

When looking at Illustrations #8 and #9 patterns, note that both of the back petals are made from one piece of ribbon, and are separated by the deep upside down “V” at the center of the length of ribbon. Notice, also, that the stitching/gathering line, shown on the pattern with a broken line, is done with one continuous length of thread, so you can gather it.

Using a pencil or a disappearing ink pen, draw a small $\frac{3}{8}$ ” circle where you want your pansy to be. Draw a horizontal line through the center of the circle. Mark a dot in the center of the circle.

Using a very fine needle and thread that matches the silk, make the tiniest gathering stitches you can make, and run the continuous stitch as shown on the pattern, and described above. Draw the gathers up until the gathered edge of the ribbon will fit around the small half-circle that you have drawn. The gathered edge of the ribbon will be toward the center of the half-circle. Use several small stitches to attach the end of the gathered ribbon at the point where the half-circle and the horizontal line meet. Distribute the gathers evenly, being sure that the “V” shape is at the center top of the half-circle. Carefully pull the two center petals apart a little so the “V” between the two petals is a little more obvious. When you are satisfied with the arrangement of the petals, use the threaded needle to very carefully stab stitch the gathers in place all around the line of the upper half-circle. Again, take the time to be sure the gathers are evenly distributed before you tack them in place. The angled tips of the ribbons can be shortened, to reduce bulk, and can then be tucked under and tacked in place.

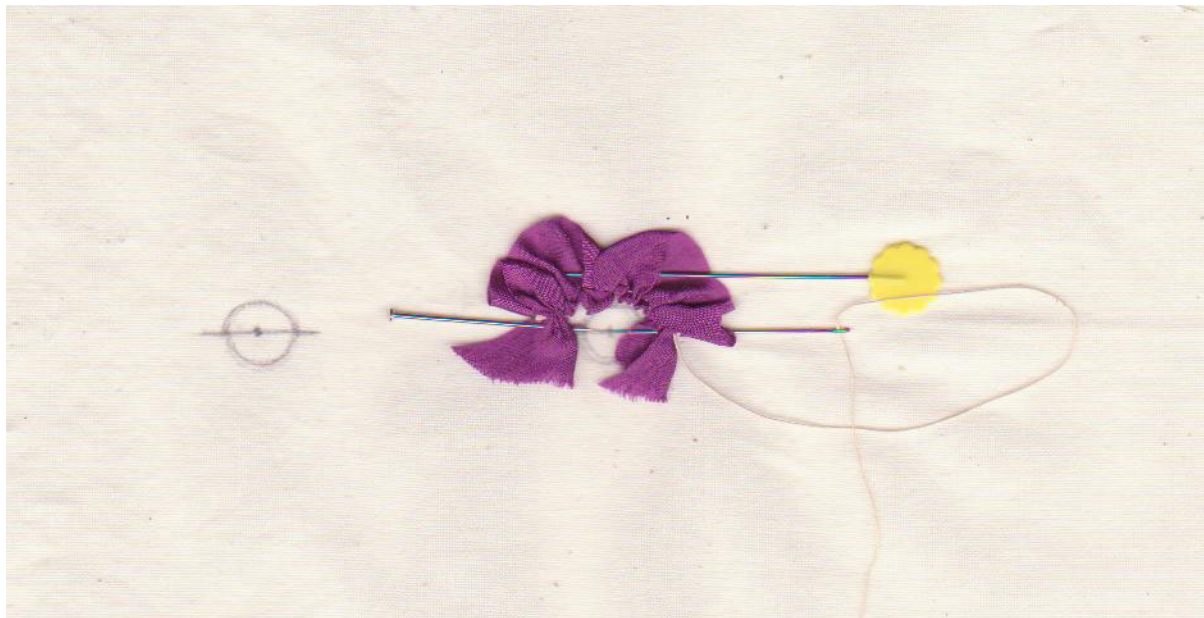


Photo #14

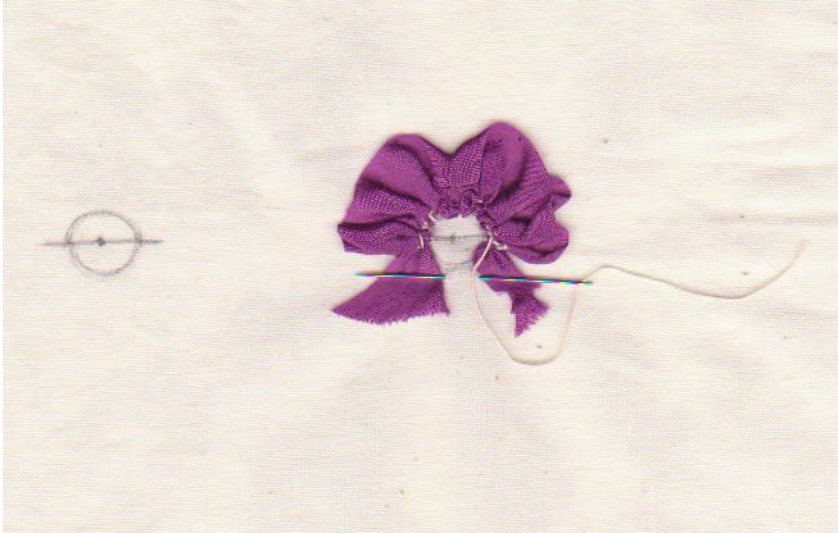


Photo #15



Photo #16

THE THREE FRONT PETALS:

Before beginning the next set of petals, notice that the three ribbon segments are not the same size. The larger segment will be the larger front petal. The two smaller segments are the petals that are the same size and shape as the back (purple) set of petals. Run the gathering stitches, beginning at the end with the two small segments are to the left. **(This is my mistake, as I should have drawn the pattern with the two small segments at the left end rather than at the right. You could also remedy the problem by flipping the pattern over – end to end, before marking the gathering line on the ribbon. Be sure the knot on the thread is at the end with the small petals. My apologies...When I have a little time, I will draw the pattern correctly and post it here.)** This time you will pull the gathers up only on the segment that has the two small petals, and working in a clockwise direction, fit the petals in place around the center dot in the circle. This will automatically drop this second set of petals down below the original purple set. Distribute the gathers evenly; making sure that the “V” between two petals are aligned with the two back (purple) petals. When you are satisfied with the arrangement of the petals, use a second needle and thread to tack the gathers in

place. Tie off and cut the thread. Using the original needle and gathering thread, tightly gather up the remaining large front petal, fold under the angled tip and then take the needle to the center dot and tack it in place. Arrange the gathers as evenly as possible, and tack them in place. Be sure that these three front petals are gathered tightly at the dot in center of the circle. Turn under and tack down any of the angled tips that might be showing. If they are a little too bulky, you can trim the tips back a little before tacking them in place.

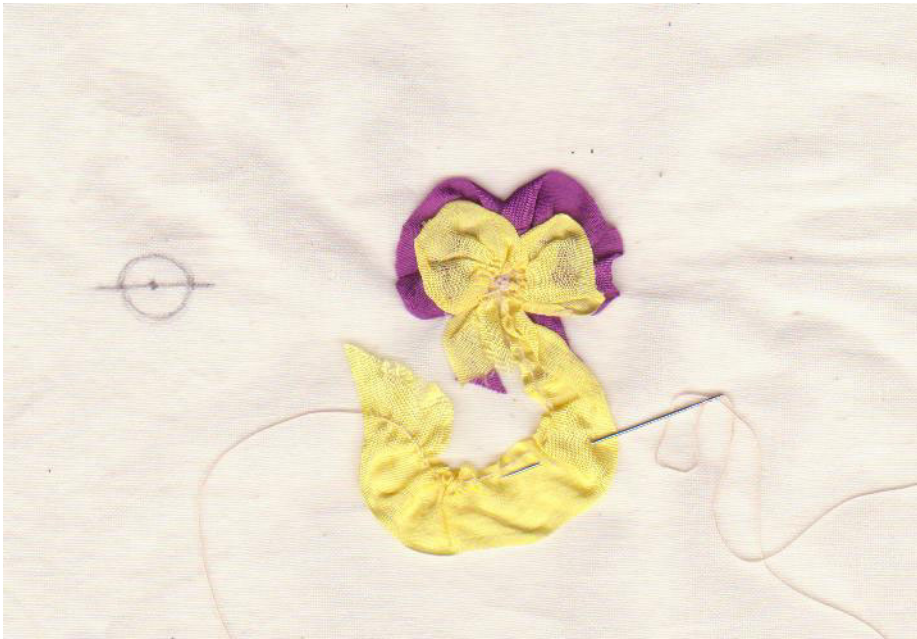


Photo #17



Photo #18 Gather the front petal tightly in at the center of the pansy, turn the angled tip under and tack the end in place gathers in place. You may need to tack the petals down in a couple of places, but do this sparingly, as the stitches can easily distort, and pull the petals out of shape. Often, just doing a little finger pressing will keep the petals in place.



Photo #19

To finish the pansy, make a yellow or gold French knot center, wrapping the thread four times around the needle, using four strands of cotton embroidery floss. Or, you can use a yellow or gold bead, or a small pearl in the center of the pansy, as shown above. Embroider the yellow moustache using small straight, bullion or fly-stitch. (Please refer to photo #22.) The leaves are plastic “beads” found at local craft stores.

SILK RIBBON LEAVES:

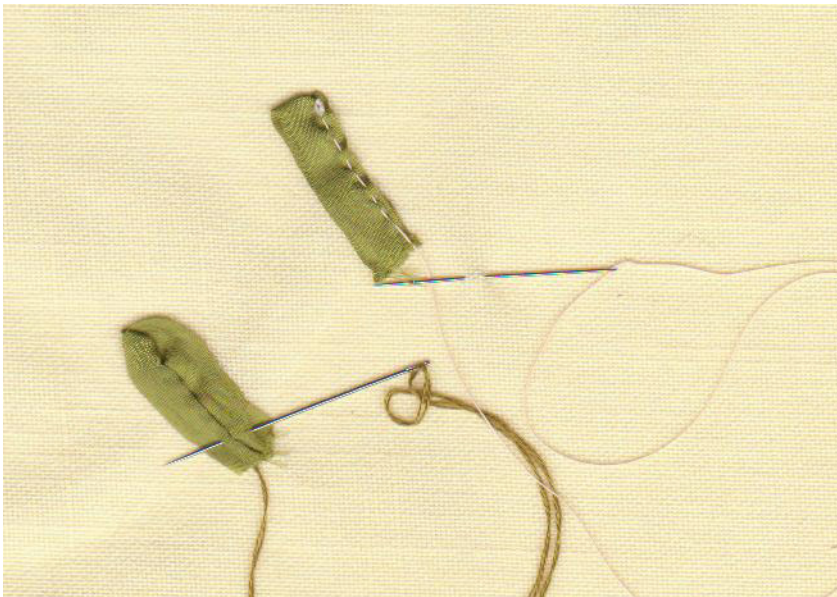


Photo #20

Cut a 2” length of 7mm green silk ribbon, and fold in half. Start at the folded end of the ribbon, and run a gathering stitch along the narrow selvage edge.

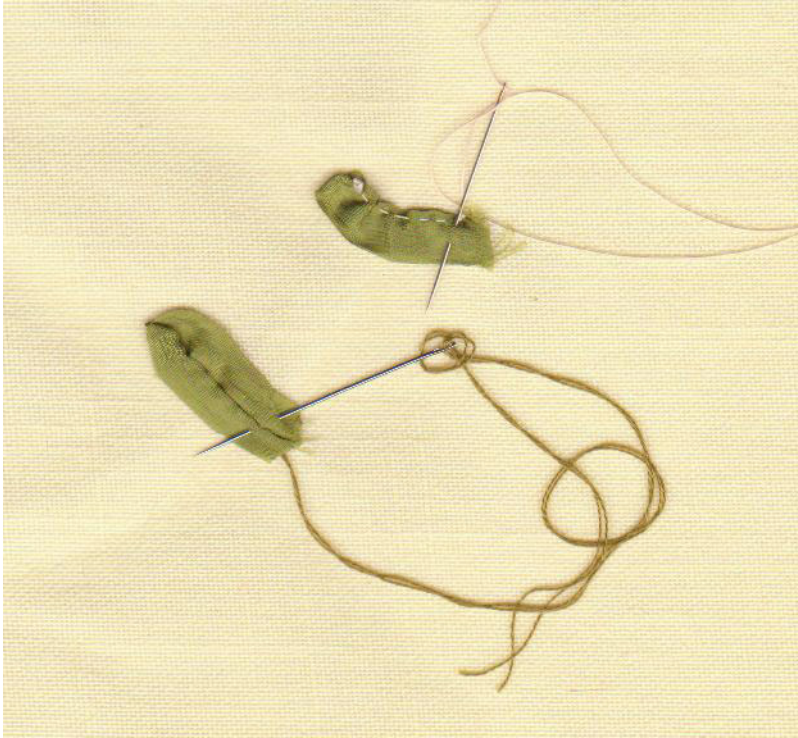


Photo #21

Pull the thread and gather the ribbon slightly, and then fasten off with a couple of small stitches.



Photo #22 Turn right side out and finger press the leaf flat. Gather the stem end of the leaf, fasten thread securely, and then sew in place. Tack the leaf down as needed. Please note the detailed example, above left, of the French knot and the “fly stitch” pansy center.