

Spring Flower Meadow Project

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1 preparation

What you will need:

- 0.5m of unbleached calico
- A soft paintbrush (medium sized)
- 20cm wooden embroidery hoop with screw fitting with inner ring bound with tape
- Water erasable embroidery pen or a soft pencil
- Machine embroidery threads. I used the following threads, but it is not necessary to buy lots of threads-use what you have:
- Dark Green DMC 501

- Bright spring green Madeira Classic (Sticku) No1169
- Pale yellow green Madeira Classic (Sticku) 1150
- Hairdryer
- Cocktail sticks
- White acrylic paint (optional)
- Small snippets of fabric for bonding onto background (nets, sheers, glitzy bits and gauze are best)
- Non-stick baking parchment
- Supermend powder
- A ready-made frame 260 by 260 approx with card mount
- Anchor stranded cotton in the following colours:
 - Blue/mauve no 118
 - Bright yellow no 298
 - Pale green no 259
 - White no 2
- Setasilk dyes (water colour paints may be used):
 - 001 primary yellow
 - 010 iris
 - 012 Gitane blue
 - 19 moss green

2 Painting

1. Cut a 30cm square of calico, place it in the embroidery frame and tighten the fabric until it is taut, being careful to keep the grain straight, and tighten the screw.
2. Using the card mount as a guide, lightly mark the area of sky and grass to be dyed as shown in Figure ???. Extend the painted area slightly beyond where the edge of the mount will be. (The area is approximately 13cm by 13cm).



Figure 1: The final project

2.1 The Background

If you are using watercolour paints the embroidery will not be washable. Once the paint-on dyes are fixed by ironing, they are permanent. Remember: you can always add more dye if the painting is too pale, but you can't take it off.

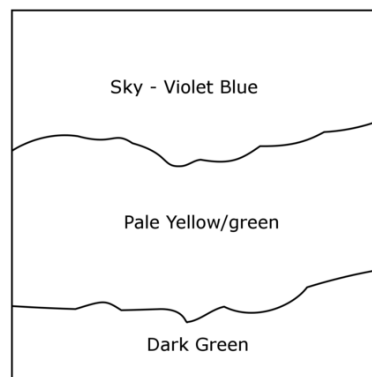
1. Using the Pebeo dyes put a small amount of each dye on separate saucers, mix the colours as follows:
 - pale blue for the sky from the Gitane blue and a little of the iris (beware the Gitane blue is very strong, so only a tiny amount is needed).
 - primary yellow with just a very small amount of the moss green for the bright grassy area.
 - a dark green from the moss green and a little Gitane blue for the dark foreground grasses and the trees.

Dilute the colours with water before use and test on a spare piece of calico before you begin.

2. Before painting the background, lightly wet the calico with water using the brush. Using large brush strokes paint in the sky colour (colour a) Keep the colour deeper at the top of the picture and paler in the 'tree area'.

3. With the calico still wet paint in the bright yellow green area (colour b) letting it run into the blue a little. Add a little of colour c for the darker area in the foreground. Try to keep all edges of the painting soft.
4. Dry off all areas with the hairdryer. The painting should look roughly like Figure ??.
5. Add the trees at the top of the design and the line of grasses at the bottom of the design by over -dyeing in the darker green c you have mixed and using the primary yellow for the outside edges of the trees Before doing this add some branches 'painted' by dipping a blunted cocktail stick into neat moss green dye. Damp the tree area slightly and using the dark green dye paint the trees using a dabbing movement of the brush. Take care to leave 'holes' for the sky to show through. Try to get a variety of tones of green by adding some yellow to the mixture. Dab this along the tops of the trees.
6. On a dry background paint in the lines of grasses at the base of the design start at the base of the grasses and paint the lines from base to top.
7. Dry your painting.

The painted background should look roughly like Figure ?. If you are not happy with it, don't worry, as you can always do another background using your spare calico; I often paint two backgrounds at the same time and choose the best one to stitch on! When you are happy with your painted background fix the dyes by ironing on the reverse side with a warm iron for a few minutes.



(a) Outline



(b) Painting

Figure 2



Figure 3: Further Painting

3 Bonding

To give tone and texture to the background, sprinkle a little Supermend powder onto the painted background and bond small snippets of fabric onto the 'flower' area. I used bits of net and dyed gauze bandage plus some glitzy fabric. (Cover with non-stick baking parchment before ironing). The design should look roughly like Figure ??.

4 Machine Embroidery

To commence the machine embroidery place the painted background fabric into the 20cm embroidery hoop. For machine embroidery the frame is turned over and the stitching is worked into the 'well'. This is shown in Figure ??. Set your machine for free machine embroidery, removing the presser foot and lowering the feed dog. Fit a size 90 needle. If you are not a confident free machine embroiderer read through 'tips for free machine embroidery' at the end of this article, before you begin to stitch. Machine over the area of grasses at the bottom of your design using the dark green thread 501DMC in free running stitch. Aim to make clumps of grasses and bend the stems to give movement. I machine up a grass, make the head, lift the presser foot move across to another grass, make the 'head' and then machine down the second grass. If you do not wish to use machine embroidery you can make the design using just hand stitching. In that case I would use one strand of stranded cotton and sew the grasses in stem stitch.



Figure 4: Bonding

4.1 Tips for free machine embroidery

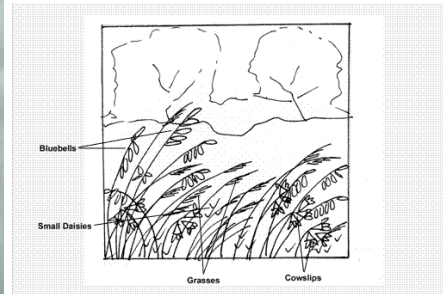
Before you begin to stitch on your embroidery, work some free machining on a spare piece of fabric until you get into the rhythm and feel comfortable. Holding your hands on the edge of the hoop and machining into the 'well' practise 'drawing' and writing your name by moving the hoop. Run the machine fast so the stitches are small and closer together and be careful to keep your fingers away from the needle. As you stitch, try to relax your shoulders and don't jerk the fabric. Slackening the top tension a little stops the bottom thread from showing, if you tighten the top tension enough the bobbin thread will be pulled up from underneath-this is called whip stitch .

5 Hand Stitching

At this stage you can tease out some of the bonded bits of fabric, if you feel you have 'overdone' the bonding stage Figure ?? Four strands of stranded cotton used throughout At this stage start adding the hand embroidery. Using Figure ?? below, as a guide draw in, with the water erasable embroidery pen, the stems of the bluebells. Then add the flowers heads using detached chain stitches in stranded cotton No. 118.



(a) Hand Stitching



(b) Hand Stitching Guide

Figure 5

6 Finishing

Add the sepals of the cowslip flowers (three straight stitches for each) using stranded cotton No259. The petals are then added with straight stitches in stranded cotton No298. Finally add a few daisies in white stranded cotton as in Photo E. The embroidery is finished with more machine embroidery. Using the bright green thread No 1169 add the stems for the bluebells in running stitch, and add a few grasses in the same colour. Then using the pale green thread No 1150 add more grasses to finish the embroidery. These will show up well against the darker threads you have used. At this stage add some small dots of white acrylic paint using a blunted cocktail stick. To represent background flowers. Your embroidery should look similar to ??.

7 Mounting and framing

Stretch and lace the embroidery tightly onto a piece of firm card or the backing board from the frame. Use the mount with the aperture to check that the embroidery is in the correct position. Frame as desired.



Figure 6: Ready for framing

8 Suppliers

Pebeo dyes, supermend and other embroidery requirements:

Rainbow silks,
6 Wheelers Yard,
High St ,
Great Missenden,
Bucks
HP16 OAL.
Tel 01494 862111.
rainbowsilks.co.uk

Machine embroidery threads:

Barnyarns Ltd,
Canal Wharf,
Bondgate Green,
Ripon,
North Yorks
HG4 1AQ
Tel: 01765 690069
barnyarns.co.uk