

## Spring Mystery Part 5

**Welcome back,**

I'm a firm believer that every quilt needs a little appliqué..., or sometimes even more than "just a little"! But, if appliqué translates to the "A" word, you can sit back, relax and skip this month's installment AND your top will still be pretty. Just as importantly, your quilt will be your design!

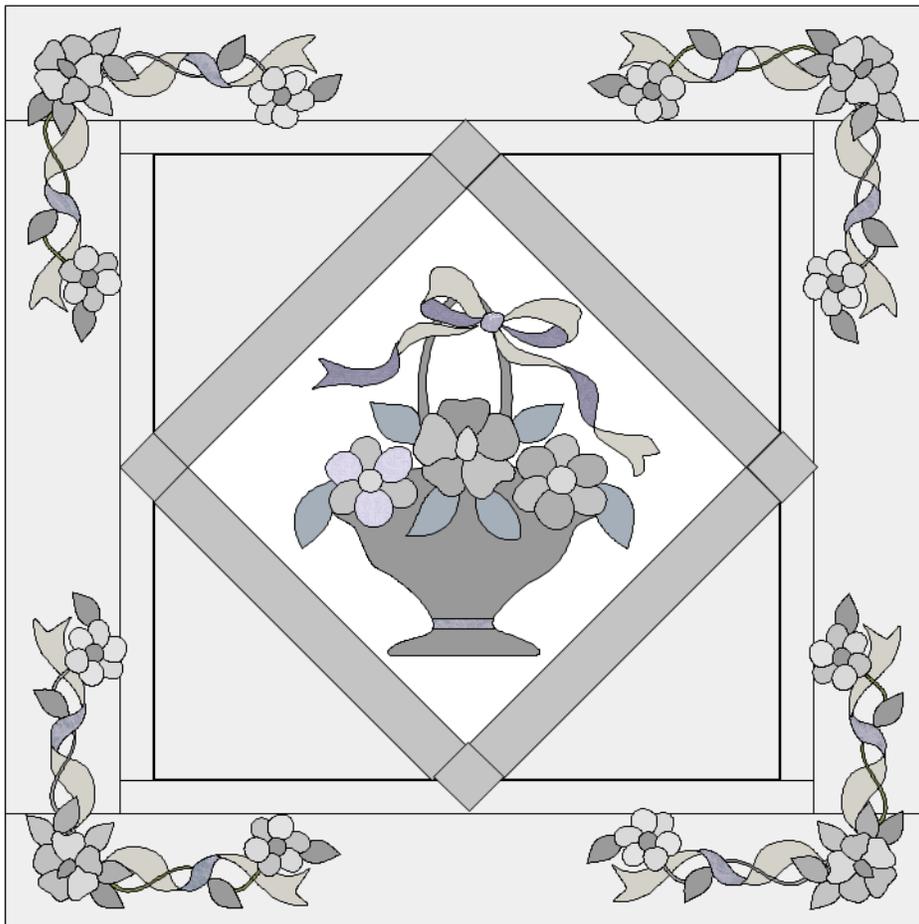
You knew that I wasn't just going to give you two choices, to appliqué or to leave the borders as we stitched them last month. First you'll get to pick between two designs for the corners. Then, there is one more surprise. Since the one corner design incorporates a flowing ribbon, I felt like the basket needed something to tie in the ribbon. So, you'll also have to decide whether to add the ribbon bow to your basket handle.

Here is what your first border designs will look like with the basket design I gave you in the first installment. .



The second option has ribbons and flowers intertwined in the corners plus I'm showing the basket with a bow tied on the handle. Remember, either of these designs work with whichever basket you choose to use. If you have Electric Quilt 7, you can download the file for this installment and play with both options. Here are a couple hints for my EQ users: both border options are motifs, and will be found on the second tab (motifs) of your Sketchbook. I don't mean to be boring you, but finding motifs is one of the most frequently asked questions I get when I'm helping someone work with EQ.

Another frequent question comes with putting the motifs on your quilt top, remember to click to Layer 2 and use the adjust tool to size the motifs.



The stems in both of these corner units are less than 1/4". Here is a tutorial on how I do Skinny Stems.

I've been asked many times "How do you get your stems so skinny?" You'll laugh when I tell you that I developed this technique quite by accident. I'm pretty much a self taught through books and trial & error when it comes to appliqué. I was trying to follow instructions for a bias tube stems from a book. It didn't work quite like the author intended. I hope you have more luck with my technique!

1. Cut a 1" bias strip from your stem fabric. I find batiks and other tightly woven cotton work best. We are going to be working with very small seam allowances.
2. Fold the bias strip in half; length-wise and sharply crease the fold. This can be done either using a Hera marker or your fingernail. I've found the easiest way is to lay the folded fabric along the back of my index finger and pulling my thumbnail along the fold. When you pull fabric this way, creating the sharp crease, the fabric will curve slightly. This is good!



3. I use a clear plastic overlay to position all of my appliqué shapes, with one exception. I draw the lines for stems and tendrils on the background fabric using a light box and wash-away marker.
4. Position the folded side of your stem along the outside curve of the stem line on the background fabric. Closely stitch this edge of your stem to the background. Secure the end of your stitching with a few tack stitches, but DO NOT cut your thread.

5. Open the bias strip and carefully trim the “bottom” half of the folded strip to within a scant 1/8 inch of your stitching line.



6. Fold the top half of the stem back over your stitch line. Trim strip to about 1/4”



7. Now using your needle, turn and tuck about 1/8 inch of stem fabric in and back against the edge you have previously sewn to the background fabric. You are needle turning the second edge of the stem, but also using the turned under fabric to slightly stuff the stem. Continue needle turning and stuffing the second edge, and then secure the thread and clip.



Most stems are covered by a flower or leaf at one end and a bowl, basket, large leaf, etc at the other. If one end of the stem is visible, I simply flair out the end and needle turn this edge to the background before I clip the top half of the stem strip.

Several people will ask why, if I cut away about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the fabric strip, not just cut my initial strip smaller. First, we are only taking about 1" of fabric and we'll throw at least that much away squaring something up before rotary cutting. So don't stress about throwing away this tiny bit of fabric. The reason I cut the stem so wide is that it is much easier to hold and fold a larger piece of fabric than something this tiny. Would you really want to try folding a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " strip in half? Besides, I'm helping you incrementally reduce your stash, so you can buy new greens!

I know it won't surprise you guys that I'm going to say, "you have another choice"! If you don't want to make skinny stems, you can do the stems with embroidery. A few of the stitches I'd choose from include stem stitch, whipped stem stitch and whipped chain stitch. Whether you are new to embroidery or not, you might want to check out a recent release "The Elegant Art of Hand Embroidery, Embellishment and Appliqué" by Janice Vaine. I don't have any affiliation with her; I found this to be a wonderful reference book and you might too!

Well now is the time to put on a pot of tea, pull up your comfy chair and relax with some appliqué! I hope you enjoy working of this segment as much as I did!

Next month we'll look at two pieced outer borders... until then, have fun!

That's it for this month, now let's go sew!

Jo