

MORE FROM M CREATIVE J

YOUR PATTERNS FEATURE MANY ASPECTS OF NATURE. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS AREA TO CONCENTRATE ON?

When I started embroidering, I dabbled with a variety of themes. Being new (again) to the craft, I found that I couldn't always get the exact design I had in my head and that some themes required much more precision than others. I eventually chose nature because it's all around me. I've grown up in different landscapes. From drier desert-like regions to lush green areas of Washington state, each has its own beauty. I love the different textures and colors each place offers. I can pull inspiration from walks around the neighborhood with my pups and while I'm on vacation. Nature is also a very forgiving theme. Nature is a growing, living concept that sometimes has funky colors and weird textures, and isn't always perfect. It reminds me that I don't have to be perfect and can enjoy the process.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN YOUR EMBROIDERY KITS? IF A STORE IS OFFERING A CLASS, WHAT OTHER SUPPLIES SHOULD BE AVAILABLE? WHAT ABOUT ADD-ON SALES?

M Creative J embroidery kits are self-contained. I like to joke that you just need scissors and yourself. While each kit is slightly different based on the design and finishing, most kits generally include quilting cotton fabric, a beechwood hoop, full skeins of DMC embroidery thread, an embroidery needle, a water-soluble transfer pattern, materials to finish the embroidery in the hoop and full-color printed instructions with step-by-step photos.

The great thing about embroidery is that you don't need many materials to get started, but there are lots of fun accessories you can add on if you want to.

Since teaching workshops, I have started a collection of adorable small scissors that students get to use; by the end of class students usually want their own cute pair. In my workshops we also use Ponderosa Creative Thread Gloss. I have my own blend, Mojave. Thread gloss is a scented beeswax that you run the thread through. It helps keep the thread together to make it easier to thread the needle, prevent tangles and knots, plus it smells yummy. Many of the stores I teach at now carry a selection of thread gloss scents because students find it to be such a helpful tool. Additionally, many shops will add needle threaders, needle cases or needle books, and a small selection of thread. While most stores can't compete with the big-box craft stores on thread, there are quite a few indie designers and small-batch options that shoppers won't find at the bigger stores.

WHERE DID YOU COME UP WITH THE IDEA OF EMBROIDERED SHOES? IS IT DIFFICULT? ARE WHOLESALE ORDERS FOR YOUR BOOK DIY EMBROIDERED SHOES AVAILABLE?

When pitching the concept of a second embroidery book to my editor, I wanted to write about clothing embroidery. I love upcycling my wardrobe and making it my own with stitching. In this pitch, I submitted photos of potential projects. One of those projects was a pair of embroidered shoes with mountains and a sunset. After talking with my editor and the team, we decided to niche down to shoe embroidery for my second book.

Before writing *DIY Embroidered Shoes*, I had embroidered a lot of clothes, but only a few pairs of shoes. Embroidering shoes is very similar to work on clothing. Some materials and shoe styles are easier to stitch on than others. (I break this down in my book.) In general, I found it very important to take breaks when stitching on shoes. Shoe material is tougher than anything else I've stitched on. After embroidering on so many pairs of shoes in a row, my hands started to ache. So please be kind to your hands and take breaks with stitching your own shoes!

I'm excited to share that *DIY Embroidered Shoes* will be available in December. Similar to my first book, *How to Embroider Texture and Pattern*, this book includes an embroidery primer with detailed information from beginner-friendly to advanced designs. You'll be able to embroider 13 finished shoe patterns, including downloadable designs that can be used on any of the most popular brands, from Converse All Star high-tops to Toms. I love using embroidery stitches to create texture, and this book includes an extensive stitch dictionary along with additional pattern collections including birds, bugs, butterflies, planets, flowers, plants, fruits, vegetables, the alphabet and landscapes. Each project includes step-by-step photo instructions for stitching on shoes, plus an overview of the tools, threads and canvas shoes you'll need.

Shops can preorder copies from their distributor or through my publisher, Fox Chapel Publishing at sales@foxchapelpublishing.com or by calling (800) 457-9112.

DO YOU HAVE TRUNK SHOWS OR OFFER SAMPLES?

I've never done a trunk show! I've participated in craft fairs and pop-ups. I love to have samples at events, but because it's just me running M Creative J, it's very hard for me to offer samples to stores. Often stores will purchase an extra kit and make a sample or create a framed display similar to what I showcase at events.

BESIDES KITS, WHAT OTHER PRODUCTS DO YOU WHOLESALE?

Peel, Stick, and Stitch Patterns are some of my most popular items. These pattern packs include water-soluble sticker designs that offer more freedom with embroidery. You can use them on anything, from a denim jacket to a bag to shoes! I love to think of these patterns as coloring books where you can choose your own colors and stitches to make the design your own.

Along with kits and patterns, I have seasonal items that I wholesale. These have included stickers, ice-dyed fabrics, scissors and needle books. I've found that needle books and scissors are more popular in the winter as an add-on item for gift givers.

WILL YOUR BUSINESS CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON EMBROIDERY OR WILL YOU BRANCH OUT INTO OTHER AREAS?

Embroidery will always have my heart! I've dabbled in other mediums like punch needle, weaving, quilting and dyeing. While I've enjoyed them, I find myself drawn back to embroidery. Trying new crafts has been a fun way to explore and see how I can incorporate them into my embroidery practice, but I haven't found another craft that I'd do over embroidery yet.

WHEN YOU'RE NOT STITCHING UP A STORM, WHAT ELSE DO YOU DO?

While I often feel like I live and breathe embroidery, I have been working to find a better work-life balance. My husband and I have two Shar-Pei pups, Henley and Landen, who are great at reminding us to take play breaks and go on walks. I also love baking! My go-to cookie recipe is the Toll House Chocolate Chip Cookie recipe, and then I throw in additional fun things like cocoa powder and dried cherries, or oatmeal and peanut butter. They always turn out great no matter what additions get added into the mix.

During the summer my friend Sara Barnes and I host Camp Craftaway, a day camp for crafty adults. This year's camp will be at the Alki Beach Bathhouse on August 2-4. This is our third year hosting the event. Camp was started because Sara and I found we never had time to try all the crafts we wanted to and sometimes didn't even know where to start. By getting to take hands-on classes throughout the weekend from local artists you get an immersive experience from experts and get to try all sorts of new crafts. Even though putting on Camp Craftaway is a lot of work for just the two of us, it's the weekend I look forward to most during the summer.