



Blackwork Journey Blog

May 2026



Embroiderers' Association of Canada, Inc.
Association canadienne de broderie, Inc.

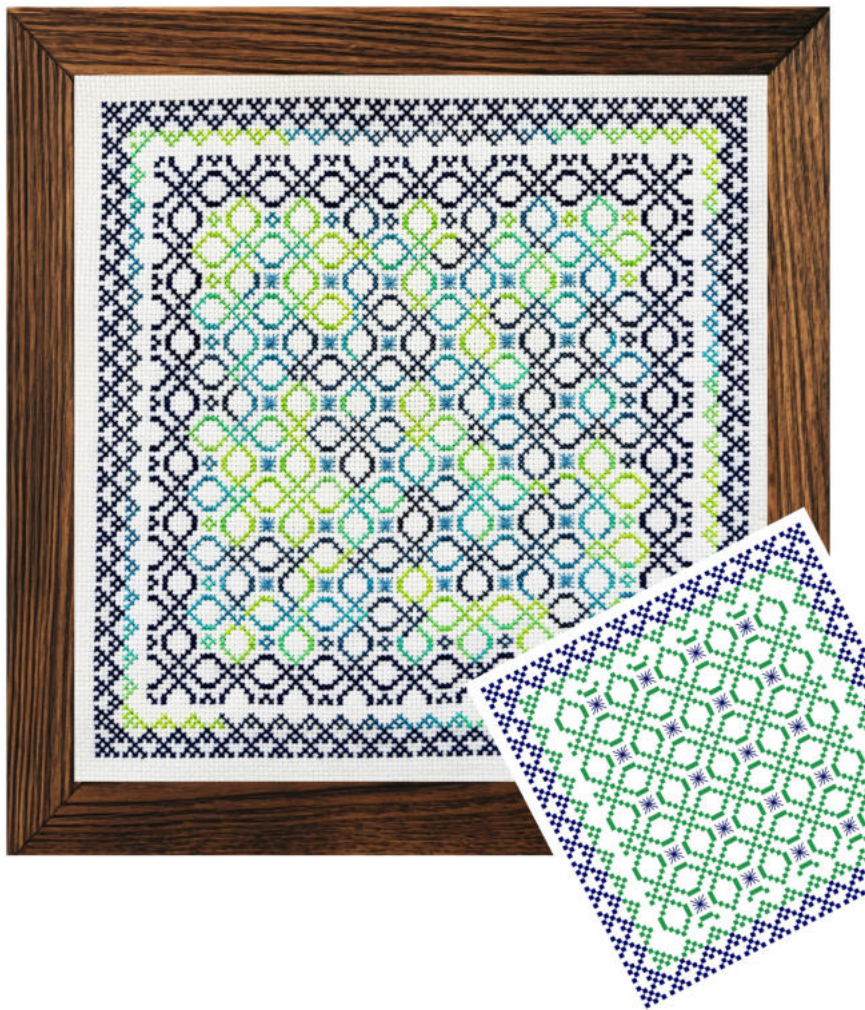
Mindful stitching inspired by....

Beautiful scenery, landscapes and tranquil gardens have always inspired my embroidery designs whether it is the formal gardens from a temple in Japan or the rugged landscape of the Yorkshire Dales.



Last month I discussed the key aspects of “Mindful Stitching” and this month I provide the final part of my cross-stitch mindfulness series with CS0017 Design 6.

These six cross designs are based on traditional Japanese sashiko patterns. Mindful stitching is tactile, repetitive and requires concentration, which helps break negative thought patterns and induces a state where time seems to slow down as it can often lower blood pressure and anxiety. This can be helpful when under pressure whether from health issues or difficult circumstances where the need to step away from daily living is important.



CS0017 Mindful Stitching Design 6

This interlocking cross stitch design is worked in plain or variegated thread or Cotton P erle No.8 on Zweigart 14 count Aida or Zweigart 28 count evenweave fabric.

The Japanese border is a variation of a pattern called Urokozashi (fish scale stitch).

Design Area: 9.36 x 9.36 inches.

Stitches: 131 x 131

Since life is often stressful, I have found designing and stitching these patterns to be very therapeutic and I know from talking to other members of my own stitch and textile group what an important part needlework plays in their lives in helping them cope.

Sustainability and Practicality

In 2026 I made the conscious decision not to buy any unnecessary threads or fabric other than for teaching, but to use what I already had in my workroom and to look at recycling some of the clothes I no longer wear either by donating them to charity or using them in other projects such as Japanese boro and Indian kantha where discarded textiles are reused in other projects such as clothing and quilts.

By repairing, mending zips, replacing buttons and altering garments expands their lifetime and reduces waste which in turn reduces the amount of fabric sent to landfill, is eco-friendly and directly reduces the carbon footprint. It also teaches the ability to reuse materials to create something functional and beautiful.



I work as a volunteer in the Scrap store at a homeless charity called “Emmaus” and it is interesting to see how many students from the local university come into the shop looking for threads and fabrics to personalise a cheap tee-shirt or jeans or find materials for a current project! For our more mature visitors, tins of buttons collected by granny always provokes interest and recollections of the days when mending was part of everyday life.

Having seen the effects of waste and pollution on the environment in India and parts of the Far East I feel I should play my part in reducing waste and the Scrap store is a tangible way of putting theory into practice.

Stitch Along 2025

Finished pieces are coming in every week now and it is a real pleasure to see them and hear about the individual journeys involved. To see work in progress and how people have taken an idea and developed it in their own way, whether by changing colours or adding their own stitches, encourages others especially those who are new to embroidery and may lack in confidence.

However, this is just the beginning. You need to use the stitches you have worked so hard to learn in different ways and to practice your stitches!

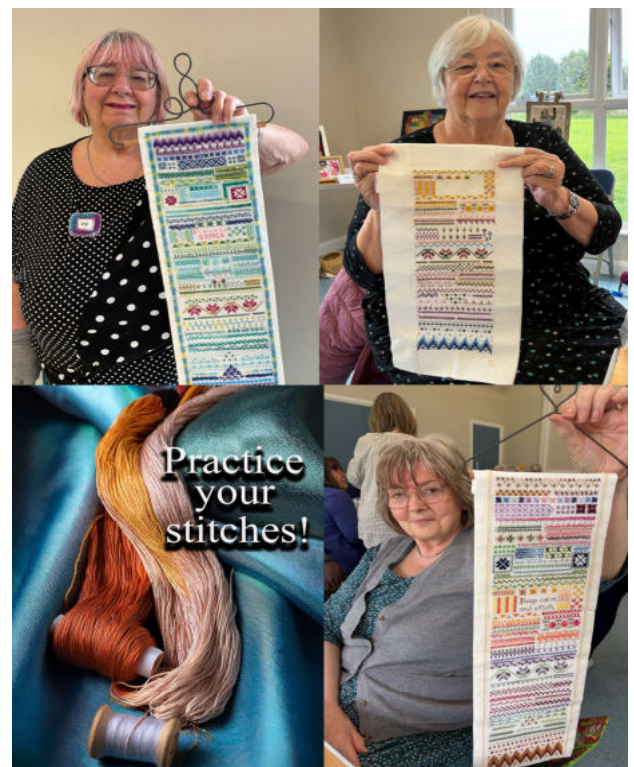
Val and friends from my local Bolton Stitch and Textile Group show their samplers.

Practice your stitches, Mini Project Part 1.

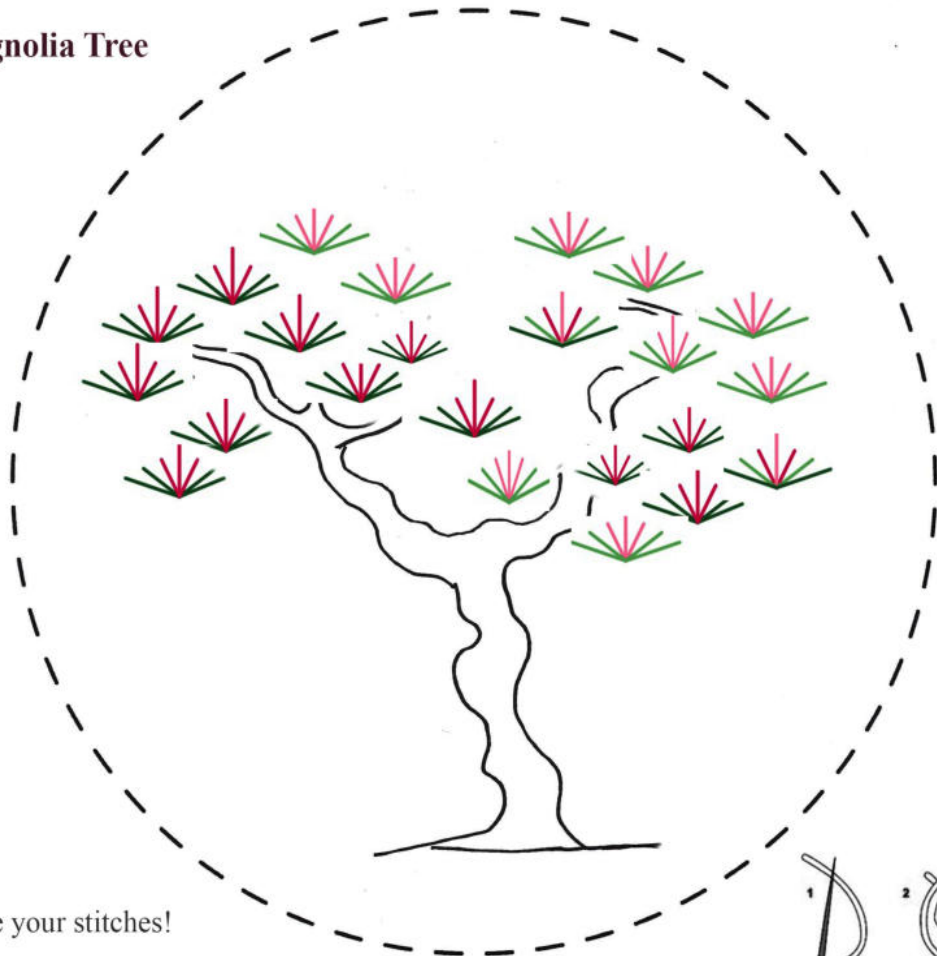
This month I have included a small project based on a favourite Spring tree, the magnolia. Whilst it is only in bloom for a very short time it makes a vivid splash of colour.

Fabric: Medium weight cotton or pre-washed calico. 9 x 9 inches.

Threads: Stranded floss from your stash. 2 shades of brown (trunk), 2-3 shades of pink (fly stitch flowers), 2 shades of green (leaves).



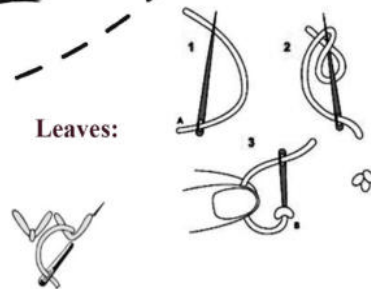
Magnolia Tree



Practise your stitches!



Leaves:



Detached fly stitch & Colonial knot

Trunk:

Reverse chain stitch whipped, running stitch
Back stitch whipped

Reverse chain





It uses specialist stitches in a small tree design. Trace the design onto the fabric using a water-soluble pen or an HB pencil. Do not draw the circle. It is there for guidance to contain the embroidery.

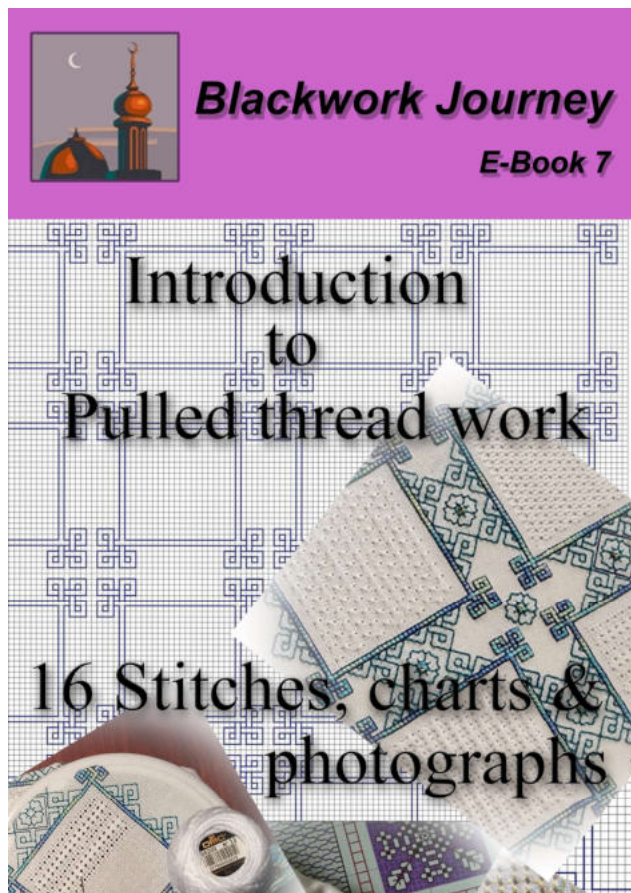
Stitches used:

1. Detached fly stitch, 2 - 3 strands,
2. Colonial knots 3 strands. Add as many knots as you wish.
3. Reverse chain stitch whipped (LH side of trunk 3 strands, whip with 2).
4. Reverse chain stitch (RH side of trunk), 3 strands.
5. Running stitch 3 strands. Blend the two shades of brown together to make a contrast.

Next month I will add the flowers and leaves at the base of the tree.

A Chapter Challenge - Liz's Legacy

Over the years I have shared many designs with different groups round the world from South Africa, Kenya America and Canada and it gives me great pleasure when I receive an e-mail such as this one from Mary in Canada and with her permission I have shared the e-mail and article with you. It was based on EB0007 "Introduction to Pulled thread work".



Hi Elizabeth,

Two years ago, I asked permission to use your pulled thread stitch-along with my Embroidery Association of Canada chapter, Tulip Tree Needlearts. You very enthusiastically gave permission and so in the fall of 2024 one or two charts were given monthly to our members.

June 2025 saw the completion of most of the stitching, photos were taken and an article written for Embroidery Canada, the EAC/ACB biyearly magazine.

I have attached a copy of this article with my sincere thank you for allowing our members to remember our friend in a very meaningful and beautiful way.

*Yours in stitching,
Mary*

The Tulip Tree Needlearts Guild is an active chapter of the Embroiderers' Association of Canada (EAC/ACB) based in the Chatham-Kent area of south west Ontario. For over 20 years, the guild has promoted traditional and modern embroidery through social stitching, workshops, and community exhibits.

Embroidery is a joy to be shared across the world bringing people together with love and support.



FR00181 Do what you love.

This design can be found in “Freebies” section on the Blackwork Journey website

I hope you have enjoyed this month’s Blog.

If you have any queries, please contact me at: lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching,

Liz

A Chapter Challenge – Liz's Legacy

by Mary Robertson, Tulip Tree Needlearts Guild

Tulip Tree Needlearts Guild members were issued a challenge to stitch something on a beautiful piece of 22-count light blue evenweave fabric. The fabric was donated to the chapter in 2024 by the family of the late Elizabeth (Liz) Wilken, who died in 2019. Liz had 4½ yds (4.1 m) of this beautiful fabric in her stash with the intention of stitching a pulled-thread tablecloth – a popular wedding gift for family members from Liz and her husband, Ron.

Each chapter member was given a 23" x 23" (58 x 58 cm) square of the fabric, other than me as I had a 16" x 16" (40 x 40 cm) square and Liz's two daughters, Jackie and Debbie, who each also had a smaller piece.

Cross stitch, pulled thread, Hardanger, cutting the fabric smaller to make cards, or incorporating the piece into a quilt were all suggestions of what to do with the square.

Pulled thread was a technique Liz learned at the needlework group in Gwelo, Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). Liz grew up there, where her parents were missionaries, and would often regale our chapter members with stories of life in Africa and her experiences and adventures growing up.

Designer Elizabeth Almond (blackworkjourney.co.uk) had a Facebook stitch-along group during the pandemic of 2020-2022, of which I was a member.

One of Elizabeth's stitch-alongs was a 16-part pulled-thread project. I wrote to Elizabeth asking for permission to share the 16 pulled-thread stitch pages with my fellow chapter members, explaining how it was going to be used for a challenge. A very enthusiastic permission was immediately given by Elizabeth, including her kind offer to give advice on each stitch if needed.

In September 2024, at the monthly meeting, one piece of fabric, along with the border instructions, was distributed to each chapter member, along with the various ideas for embroidery on the piece. Instructions included an end date of June 2025, with photos to be taken of the finished pieces.

Two to three pulled-thread stitch instructions were distributed each month over the course of the winter, with the final three stitches shared in April. Thirteen enthusiastic members took up the challenge, with nine members participating in the pulled-thread challenge, two members using the Hardanger technique, another choosing blackwork, and one member embroidering a cross-stitch piece. A couple of the pieces are still in the work-in-progress stage as of writing, prolonging the enjoyment of this stitching challenge.

Many thanks to Elizabeth Almond for the use of her stitch-along. Also many thanks to the family of Liz Wilken for allowing us to create a beautiful memory of our long-time chapter member. ■



Image 1

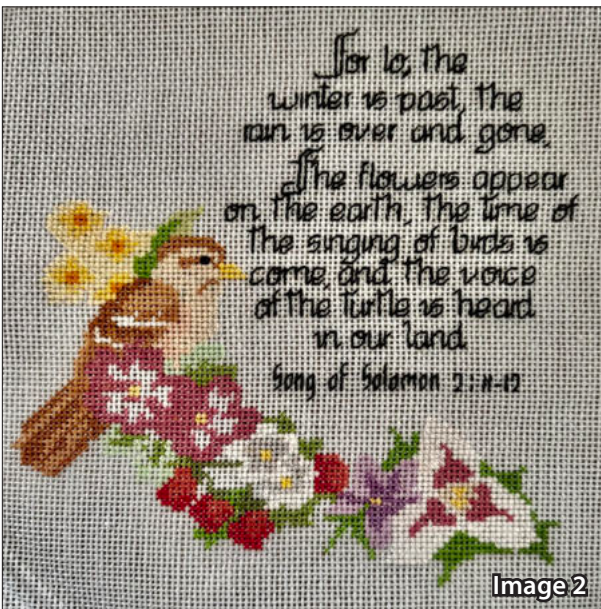


Image 2

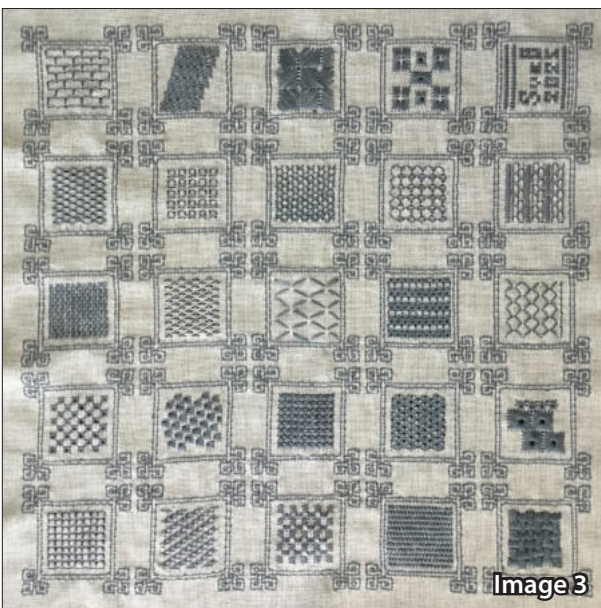


Image 3

Some of the pieces stitched on Liz's fabric: Pat (image 1); Karen (image 2); Sue (image 3); Diane (image 4); Donna (image 5); Kim (image 6); Mary (image 7); Yvonne (image 8); Ruth Ann (image 9); Karen (image 10); Claudette (image 11). (Images credit: Tulip Tree Needlearts Guild)



Image 4



Image 9



Image 7



Image 5



Image 10



Image 8



Image 6



Image 11