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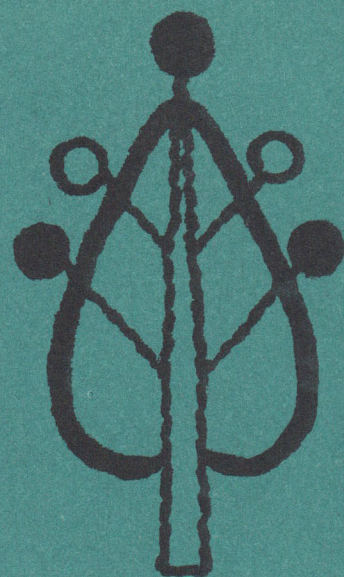
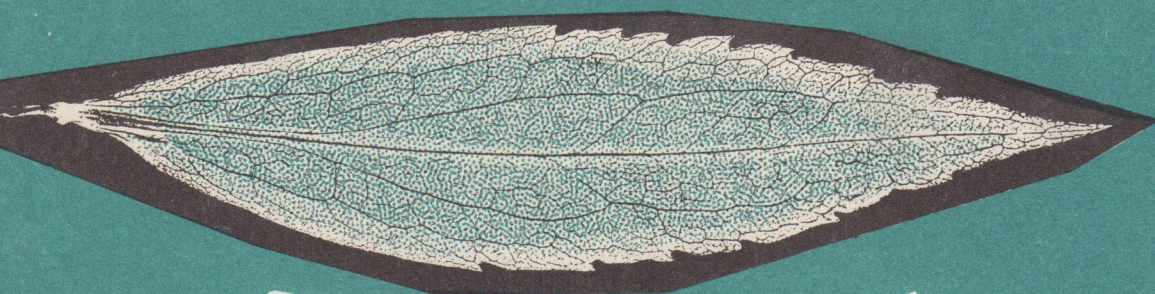
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# ...AND SO TO EMBROIDER



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**NDS**

**BULLETIN 26B DESIGNING WITH LEAVES**





From earliest times needlewomen have taken as a subject for design the plant and leaf forms familiar to them in their everyday life. When looking at embroideries from your own and other countries, you will notice how frequently and in how many different ways leaves are used for decoration. You will find delicate sprays of ferns and flowers worked in white on fine muslin decorating a baby's Christening Robe or enriching the flounce of a petticoat (see illustration) in the 18th and 19th centuries. Contrast these with the treatments used on other fabrics—you will see leaves worked on the counted thread, applied to velvet or filled with intricate stitchery in vivid colours.

Because there are so many shapes and sizes of leaves, it is possible to select and adapt them to a wide range of methods and purposes. There are certain definite patterns of growth which you may have noticed when studying botany or when drawing a plant form from nature and these can be retained and interpreted successfully in stitchery. Remember, however, that you are not trying to imitate a leaf in its natural state but to create one in embroidery.

Make a collection of leaves for reference and arrange them in groups according to size and type. Many leaves are symmetrical, i.e. identical in shape on both sides of the centre vein, but there are others like the oak leaf, for instance, which are not, and such variations are always of interest to a designer. Then, some leaves have sharp, pointed or serrated edges, while others are smooth and rounded. When making cut paper shapes of your leaves, select the important characteristics which will make your pattern easily recognisable.

When arranging leaf shapes to make a decoration, consider the area which is to be filled. Notice that the curved shape of the workbag shown in this bulletin has influenced the placing of the symmetrical leaf motifs, while the straight panel on the cushion suggests a simple central arrangement.

Look at the photograph of fine white embroidery from the 19th century and see how the leaves seem to spring from an undulating stem. This form of construction is often used to suggest growth and it is the basis of the designs for the curtain and trolley cloth also illustrated.

Two of our earlier bulletins, Nos. 11B and 12B, on designing with cut paper, will help you when planning the leaf shapes for the embroideries included in this bulletin.

# Designing with Leaves

## Square Cushion

You will require  $\frac{1}{2}$  yard each of two cotton fabrics in contrasting colours to make this cushion which measures 15  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. square, also skeins of stranded cotton and coton-à-broder in the same colours. We have used bright emerald green and black, and counterchanged the colours when working the embroidery. The black centre panel measures 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. wide and is joined to the green side panels with simple seams decorated with rows of Running Stitch. Plan the leaf shapes in cut paper. The leaf motifs are 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. tall and are worked in Chain Stitch and Whipped Running Stitch, and Solid Chain Stitch is used for the fillings. The colours for the back of the cushion are reversed, the centre panel being green with black embroidery and side panels black. Piping cord covered in the black fabric is sewn round the front of the cushion while the back is piped in green. Baste the two sides carefully together and stitch through both rows of piping to make the decorative join.

## Workbag

We have made this useful bucket shaped workbag from a piece of lime green furnishing linen 22 in. x 20 in. You will also need  $\frac{1}{4}$  yard dark grey felt for the lining, some tailor's canvas for stiffening, and piping cord.

Draw out the pattern from the squared diagram, 1 square = 1 in. Again using the cut paper method, arrange symmetrical leaf motifs

The embroidery is worked in thick soft embroidery cotton and coton-à-broder, and one strand of stranded cotton is used for the finer details. Stitches include Stem Stitch, Couching, French Knots, Pekinese Stitch, Fly Stitch, Couching Filling, Portuguese Border Stitch and Raised Chain Band. See diagrams for working the last two stitches which are used on the main stems.

to fit into the curved shape. The embroidery is carried out in felt appliqué and surface stitchery in grey, white and pink. The design is the same on both sides but the colours have been counterchanged.

The sides of the bag are stiffened with tailor's canvas, and the handles and rim round the base are made from piping cord covered with the furnishing linen. Inside are two pockets to hold a needlecase and pincushion. Small star motifs decorate the top edge of the lining, and bands of stitchery are worked across the tops of the pockets.

## Curtain

A soft sage blue woollen fabric with an even weave has been chosen to make this curtain which measures 28 in. wide by 41 in. deep with a 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. hem. It could be used for many purposes, for example, to keep open shelves of books or magazines covered and free from dust. You could develop this idea further and design a larger curtain for the back of a piano or door

using the same design arrangement.

Bands of Ladder Hemstitch divide the curtain into three panels each of which is decorated with a variety of leaf shapes. The leaves are worked in Couching using a floss type embroidery cotton. The veins and stems are also worked in Couching but in soft embroidery cotton and coton-à-broder. The colours are chestnut brown, black and two shades of beige. Notice how the leaves in the centre panel are arranged to follow an undulating line which suggests upward growth. The hemline is emphasised with rows of Couching using thick embroidery threads.

The edges of the curtain are turned back to the wrong side and neatened with matching seam binding. Curtain tape is stitched on the back 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. down from the top edge to hold the hooks or curtain rings.

## Trolley Cloth

This attractive cloth is made from moss green spun rayon fabric and measures 22  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. x 15 in. with  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. hem. The arrangement of leaf sprays springs again from a basic undulating line which is broken by an occasional change of direction which adds character to the design. The embroidery is worked in terra-cotta, moss green and black. The stems are in Scroll Stitch (see diagram) using coton-à-broder, and the leaves and berries in Chain Stitch, Solid Chain Stitch Filling, Back Stitch and Satin Stitch using one or two strands of stranded cotton.

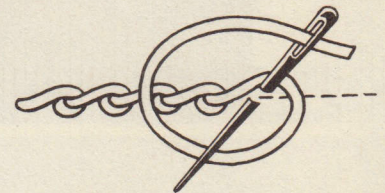
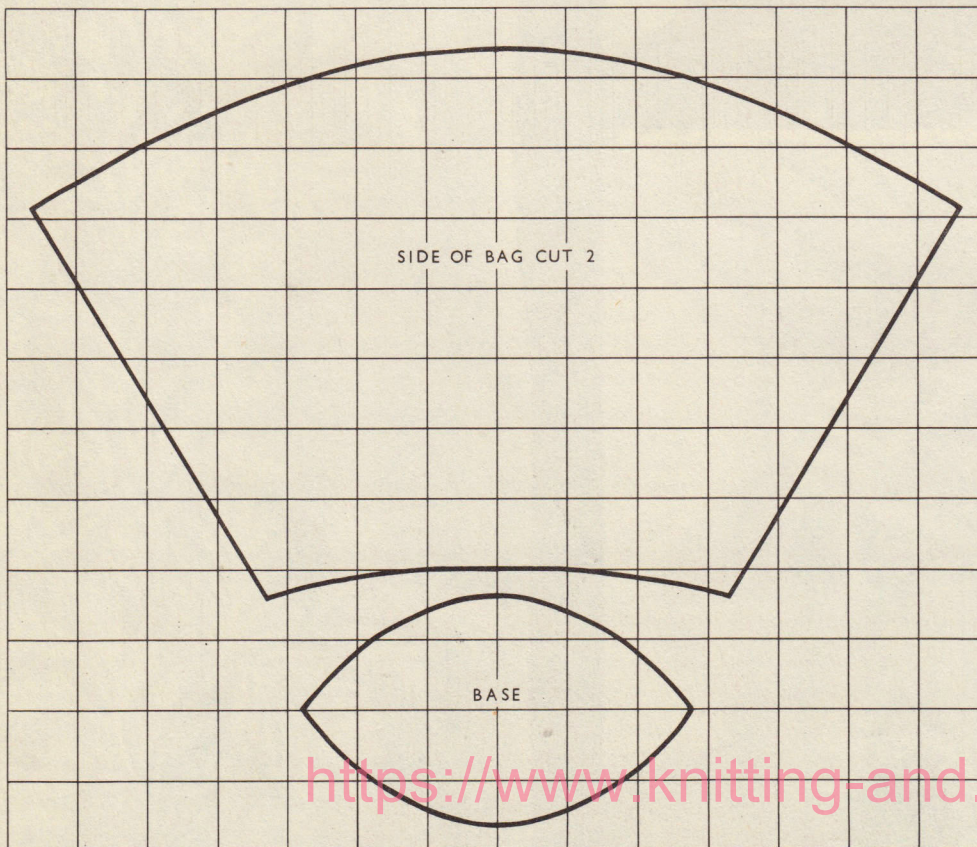








Bulletin No. 27B will give instructions for making different types of decorative edgings and trimmings.



SCROLL STITCH



PORTUGUESE  
BORDER  
STITCH



RAISED  
CHAIN  
BAND