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# TREES IN EMBROIDERY



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And so to embroider • Bulletin 36



# Trees in Embroidery

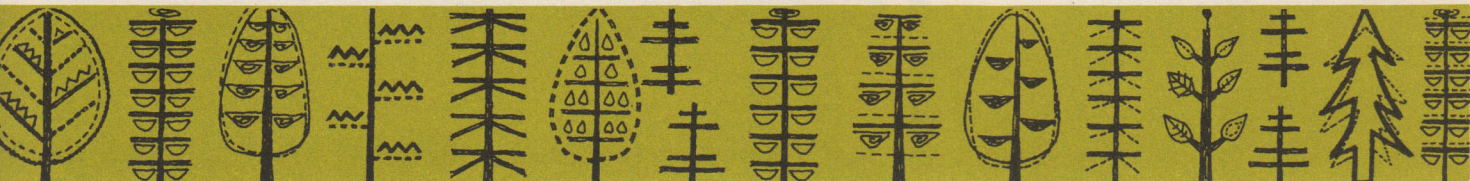
Most of us have the opportunity of seeing trees every day, as they are to be found even in the busiest city. The never-ending pattern of their growth, from bare branches to full autumn glory, can give pleasure to us all.

That trees have a mystery and fascination has been recognised for centuries. Primitive man believed that spirits lurked in their branches, and we know that many symbolic qualities have been given to them throughout the ages. The palm tree, for instance, representing The Tree of Life, is an ever-recurring symbol in many parts of the world. As long ago as 1800 B.C. it was used for decoration in ancient Egypt. One of the most famous copes worked in the early 14th century is embroidered with a vine, representing a Tree of Jesse. In our own time, the Christmas Tree is perhaps the most widely recognised of all. Students making a study of trees in history and legend will be able to trace the origin of the special meanings attached to many other trees such as the oak, the holly and the nut tree, for example.

When making a drawing or a painting of trees it is, of course, impossible to include in full detail the great intricacy of the pattern of branches and individual leaves, so that it is sufficient to give your impression of the shape or typical silhouette of the particular tree concerned, whether it be, for instance, that of the tall pointed poplar, the spreading chestnut alight with candles in spring, or the delicate weeping willow tree.

When using tree shapes to make a design, however, it is even more important to know the correct growth pattern which will vary in different types of trees. Study the way in which the branches join on to the trunk and sketch the sort of pattern the bare twigs would make against the sky. Remember, also, that the trunk itself can be full of interest with its smooth or rough texture, or mottled surface like that of the silver birch and of the plane tree so often found in city streets.

Pay attention, also, to the shape and texture of the leaves. You will remember that in bulletin No. 26 we considered some of the infinite variety to be found in leaves. Trees also flower and, of course, have seeds which are enclosed in fruit, cones, nuts, etc. Your design will be much more interesting if you can include some of these details, and you will be surprised at the exciting and unusual patterns you can make as the result of your researches.

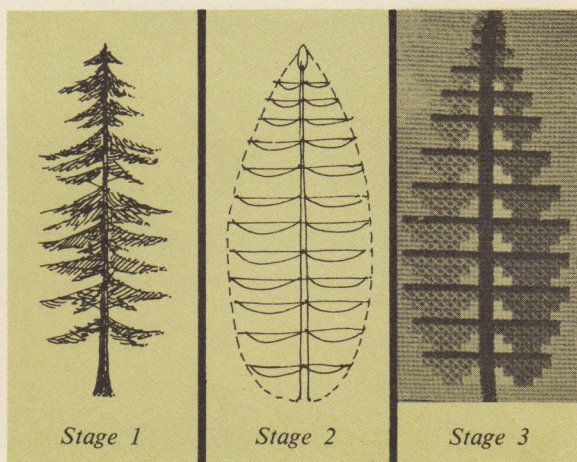
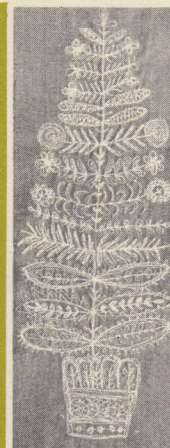
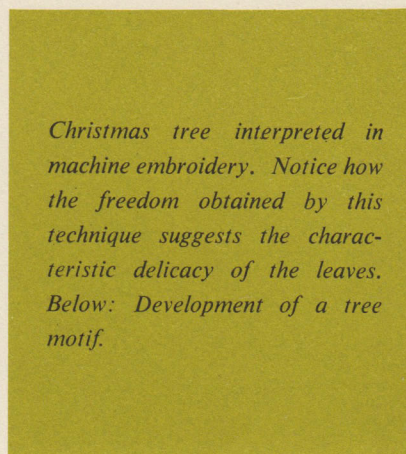
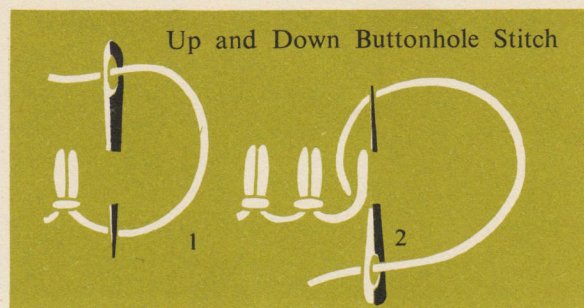


**Stool top (10 in. × 20 in.)**

This long fireside stool is worked on a fairly coarse double canvas using soft embroidery cotton combined with stranded cotton to give contrast in texture. Tent Stitch is used for the background while Cross Stitch and Rice Stitch add interest to the treatment of the motifs.

The trees and leaf shapes chosen for the design have been considerably simplified. They were planned first of all on graph paper to make them suitable for working in canvas embroidery. The characters of the oak, beech and elder trees have become rather geometrical in this method of embroidery yet it has still been possible to produce a feeling of freedom by the asymmetrical arrangement of the various shapes.





### Wall Hanging 'The Forest' (31 in. × 52 in.)

A Swedish furnishing linen in greens, turquoise and khaki inspired this 'forest' design which includes various conifers and a flowering chestnut. It is experimental in treatment, combining both hand and machine embroidery, and techniques used are appliqué, inlay, laid work, couching and other surface stitches. Many different types of threads have been chosen, including one of the very thick varieties now available.

When planning a project of this size it is essential to consider the whole effect frequently, from a distance. We started by pinning areas of coloured felt to the background, then arranging cut paper tree shapes against these. By

moving the shapes about, we were able to obtain the best effect. Lengths of thread pinned to the fabric helped to suggest where surface embroidery could be introduced.

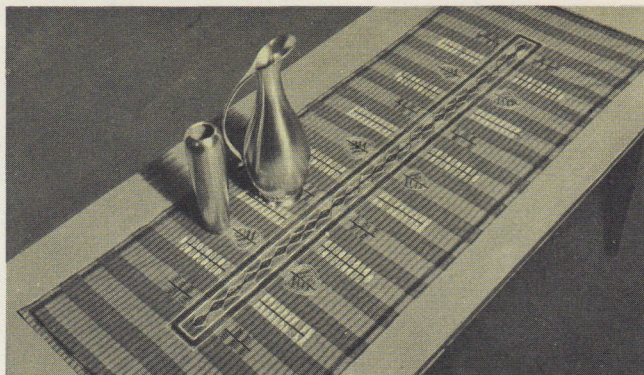
The swing needle sewing machine was used for the applied areas, the stitch being varied according to the type of fabric being applied. By this method, linen, felt, silk and even towelling were all successfully machined in position in a comparatively short time. Hand sewing would have been just as effective, of course, but would have taken much longer to do.

A row of pom-pom braid against bands of felt makes an attractive border at the foot. The hanging is finished with loops of felt sewn along the top, at intervals, and the back is lined.



### Runner for a table or sideboard (16½ in. × 47 in.)

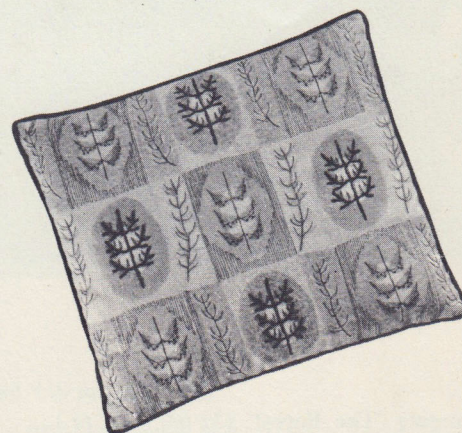
An arrangement of formal tree shapes makes the central decoration on this runner. The stripes of the brown and dark blue cotton fabric control and limit the motifs which are based on the growth of the larch, beech and hawthorn trees. The embroidery is worked mainly in Stem, Chain, Vandyke Buttonhole and Feather Stitch. The colour scheme is unusual and includes touches of bright flame and lilac as well as pale greens, dark blue and brown. Notice how the use of Vandyke Buttonhole and Fly Stitch in the borders seems to echo the spiky quality of the hawthorn and the delicacy of the larch tree.



### Teacloth (35 in. square)

This teacloth, made from rust coloured linen, is embroidered entirely in white, using two and three strands of embroidery cotton. The narrow hem is neatened with a handkerchief hemstitch. Nine tree motifs are arranged in the centre and these are linked together with lines of Double Knot Stitch. The outside border consists of two interlocking rows of Up and Down Buttonhole Stitch (see diagram). A number of simple surface stitches have been chosen for the rest of the embroidery, and an attractive feature of the design is the use of seeding to suggest the shape of the circles enclosing each tree.

Crab apple, willow and ash trees are among those which provided inspiration for this design. It is interesting to see the way in which they have been simplified to make them suitable to decorate a cloth planned for use in a modern setting.



Four close-up motifs from the teacloth.



### Scatter cushion (11½ in. × 13½ in.)

This little cushion is made from a piece of hand block printed fabric in two colours. The fir and pine tree motifs are worked alternately in hand couching and in free darning stitch using the domestic sewing machine. Sprays of pine needles are added in machining, together with areas of fine lines to give weight to the design.

This is an interesting example of the way in which the two crafts of embroidery and fabric printing can be successfully combined.

Bulletin No. 37 will contain some ideas for using appliqué.