

The Saga of the Spring Flowers Teacloth

by Margaret Cobleigh, February 2009

In the past when doing a needlework kit I haven't deviated very much from the instructions. However, that certainly changed on this project!

I used the following stitches on the cloth: satin, stem, lazy daisy, buttonhole, straight, French knots, split (outlines under the long and short shaded areas), long and short shading. The overall size of the cloth is 80cm (31.5 inches) square.

I started the teacloth in one corner and quickly realised that it was not going to be very interesting colourwise. It just seemed a little flat although I liked the basic palette. So, I decided to start playing.



This is the first corner. The first thing I changed was to use two strands instead of three as called for by the kit. I had done another teacloth from the same company (strawberry teacloth) the previous year and switched from 3 to 2 strands on that kit with nice results. I still used 3 strands on the lazy daisies and their accompanying stems because 2 strands didn't cover the lazy daisy design lines.

What I found really uninteresting was the use of single shades per motif. For example the bell flowers to the right were boring. The mushrooms, the same. I did the round blue-violet shapes in buttonhole, which is different from the instructions, but they were flat looking as well. I stitched from right to left and as I got past the mushrooms and over to the pinkish flowers and found out that they had the same colour centres as the petals I started to get really concerned that this was not going to be a project I would want to do. I'd already done 2 other teacloths and knew that I had issues with repeating the same motif over and over again. It was a real slog finishing the strawberries because about halfway through the second repeated motif I got bored.

So, I started to experiment and added lots of colours. I took the basic palette and added lighter and darker shades to make things more interesting.



The original palette is on the right and the added shades are on the left. I ended up with a much richer palette with more yellows and golds.

The primary changes I made were to add a lot of shading and to try to add a bit of depth to the various motifs. I also made small changes to each side so no two sides are exactly alike although they are similar enough that the overall look is cohesive. I also made each butterfly different which was a lot of fun. The only thing I didn't really change were the greens. I stitched them as directed by the kit with some minor exceptions.



The photo on the left shows the yellow flowers as they would appear if following the kit's instructions. They were too lightweight for me especially after I started adding shading to the surrounding 'bell flower' motifs.

I decided to add a deeper gold in between the original yellow straight stitches.

I still can't decided whether I want to add more French knots in the middle.

There are things I did that I'm not that pleased with, but they probably aren't noticeable when looking at the piece as a whole. (The following two photos are not as sharp as I'd like them to be.)



These flowers were just supposed to be light pink. I had to darken them down to work with the other changed motifs so I added a darker shadow line. Then I wanted to bring in some yellow so tried mixing two shades in the centres. I wasn't very happy with the results of the centres and I refer to this motif as the 'flying pizzas'. I left them the way they are and changed the centres in the other three occurrences of the motif.



Here's what the 'pizzas' became. The centres are stitched in a darkish gold satin stitch. It's much nicer looking. I also want to point out the leaves on the right. The original kit instructions only called for the lighter green on all four leaves. I added a darker shade and alternated the colours on the leaves. It's a subtle change, but does add depth. The mushrooms are shaded as well.



Here's my favourite motif (possibly because it's purple!). The kit called for 2 shades (the two in the photo) and I ended up using 7.

Unfortunately, it's a bit washed out in the photo. It has a nice depth in 'real life'..



Here are all the shades I ended up using (including the original two). I shaded from lighter to darker envisioning a light source from the upper left so it shades diagonally from upper left to lower right.

I put dark gold French knot centres on these flowers (not in picture). (All French knots were stitched with 3 strands.)



I never did figure out what to do with these flowers. I ended up just using 2 shades for variety.



The butterflies are all different. The rightmost one is stitched according to kit instructions.



This one was fun because I blended two completely unrelated colours and I really like the way it turned out. (I'm not thrilled with this photo.)



Here's a really simple change. Instead of using a single shade of 'blue' I added another shade and also included yellow French knot centres. None of the round flower motifs had centres in the original kit.



I added shading to the bell flowers. The shading is similar, but a bit different on each side of the cloth.



Here's the cloth in its entirety. Although not as sharp as I'd like the photo does capture the colours fairly well. I started in the upper right hand corner.

This was a really good exercise for me in colour experimentation and I'm very happy with the results. It was a lot of work, but I think it was worth the effort.