

2015-2016 GLHQ Block of the Month Challenge

March 2016 Block of the Month Challenge Iris Folding

Irish folding has similarities to paper piecing where the design is drawn on a foundation paper then folded strips are applied from the back (wrong side) but the sequence to apply the strips is entirely reversed. The center of the design forms an *iris* — a shape reminiscent of the [iris diaphragm](#) of a [camera lens](#).

This technique is used by paper crafters to make cards and ornaments and can be used with fabric with a no real modification. Actually the only modification is to the mind and attitude of the quilter. Since quilters are “can do” people, it is easy.

Since it is March and one of the fun holidays in the month is St Patrick’s Day, we’ll make a 4-leafed clover to experiment with iris folding.

Please read through all of the instructions first. If you don’t have a copy of the General Instructions, please download from the www.GLHQ.org website under ACTIVITIES, Block of the Month 2015-2016, BOM General Directions Link. All seam allowances are $\frac{1}{4}$ ” unless noted otherwise.

Materials:

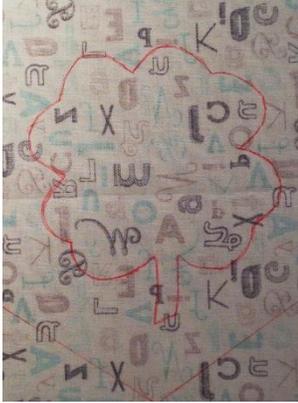
- 6” x 8” Front fabric; this will be the fabric surrounding the final iris folded fabric pieces.
- Scraps of 4 different fabrics; about 40” of each. You can use 4 values of the same color; light to dark or use 4 completely different colors. The idea is to have contrast between your “leaves” and the piece of front fabric.
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ” x 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ” center piece. This will be the middle of the iris, think about fussy cutting a fun surprise for the center.
- 6 “ x 8” Fusible Interfacing (one side fusible)
- 6”x 8” backing fabric
- 6” x 8” thin batting
- Glue stick
- Thread

Instructions:

1. Make a photocopy of the 4-leafed clover pattern on paper.
2. Mark the flag point on the wrong side of a 6” x 8” piece of interfacing by measuring up 2” on each side. Draw a line from each side down to the point at the bottom. This will help you in position the 4-leafed clover shape on your flag.
3. Draw the 4-leafed clover outline on the nonglue side of the fusible interfacing with your favorite marker. No need to draw the internal lines. Use a light box or tape to a window to see the pattern through the interfacing. Note: do not reverse the pattern.

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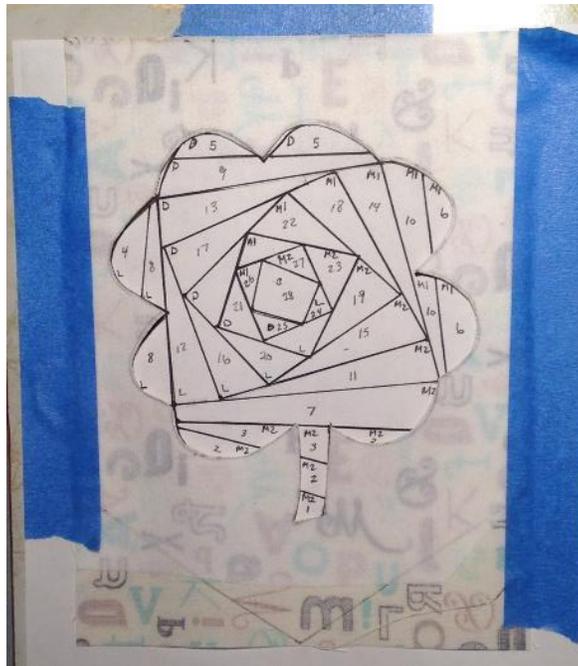
- For the front fabric, determine the orientation (which will be the top and bottom), on the back mark the top. Secure the fusible interfacing to the wrong side of the front fabric with the marked flag point at the bottom.



With sharp scissors, cut out the fabric in the center to make a window of the 4-leafed clover shape. The interfacing will help to reduce the amount of fraying of the cut out window.



- Lay the paper pattern on the work surface and tape the corners to secure it from moving around. Align and secure the cut out front fabric over the pattern with the right side down over the pattern (you want the interfacing side up toward you, like in paper piecing you are working from the backside). Make sure the cutout lines up with the pattern outline. Make sure you tape it down.



- Cut 1 1/2" wide strips of the 4 "leaf" scrap fabrics. Press them in half with wrong sides together (WST), use your favorite pressing spray to get a crisp folded edge. (Option: this might be a nice place to use those selvages you've collected. If using selvages just cut 3/4" width and don't fold.)



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7. Referring to the color chart, lay down folded strips across each segment of the pattern with the folded side against the lines (if using selvages put the bound edge against the line), this insures no raw edges are exposed. The pattern is labeled with numbers.

Color Chart:

L= lightest

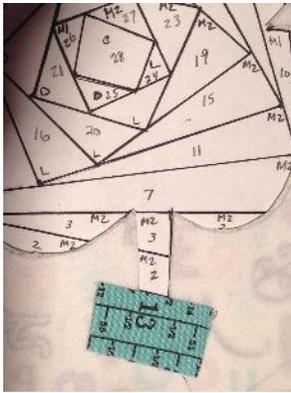
M1= light medium

M2= dark medium

D= dark

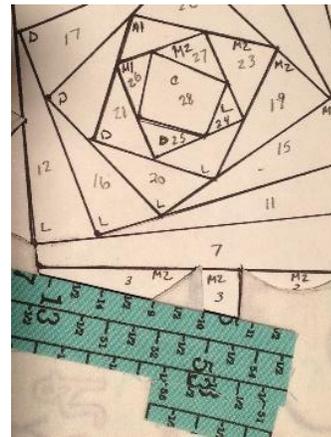
C- Center

- a. Starting with 1, it is an M2 fabric, so take a short piece of medium dark fabric and position it with the folded side snugged up to the line between 1 and 2.



Extend a generous $\frac{1}{2}$ " on each side to get enough surface area to secure it in place. Use dots of fabric glue to secure it to the back of the front fabric. Do not glue to the paper pattern since the paper will be removed later. I used an iron to heat set the glue, but be careful not to burn the paper pattern or permanently set the tape you used to hold the fabric and paper pattern down.

b. Next is 2, take another piece of medium dark (M2) and lay it down, notice it covers both the stem and one of the leaves, no need to cut individual pieces just lay one long piece across the entire area lining up the folded edge with the straight pattern line. With a few dots of glue, secure to the first strip and to the front fabric.



- c. Follow the numbers around the pattern referring to the to the color chart as you go. All you are doing is layering the folded fabric.

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d. Go around following the numbers overlapping each piece.

When you are done, this is what it will look like, remember this is the back.



8. Glue the 2 ½" x 2 ½" piece over the center square. Remember to put it wrong side down.

Here is the front without the center piece.

9. Make sure the glue is dry and all of the pieces are secured in place. Gently remove the paper pattern piece from under the front fabric.



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10. Turn over to the front and stitch on the outside edge of the 4-leafed clover shape to secure all of the strips. This would be great place to use a decorative machine stitch to enhance your design. Recommend using a large needle, at least a 90/14, since this is very thick and bulky.



11. Stitch along the interior spiral edge of each leaf, spiraling into the center to secure all of the strips together.



12. Flip over and look at the back, cut off any folded strips that extend into the outer/exterior seam allowance of the flag.

13. Make a quilt sandwich with your iris folded front fabric and backing fabric right sides together and batting on the back. Turn the entire sandwich over, so you can see the backside of the front, you should see the flag point you marked on the interfacing.

14. Cut from the 2" side marks to the bottom of the center bottom point to make the flag point.
15. Sew around the outside (1/4" seam allowance), leaving a 3" long opening (on the top or side) for turning inside out. A larger opening is better since the folded strips are very bulky.
16. Trim points, trim the batting close to the seam being careful not to cut the seam allowances from the front or back fabric.
17. Turn right side out. Close opening, add other decorative stitches and/or top stitch around outside of flag with a decorative stitch, if desired.
18. At the top, stitch 3/4" long buttonholes 3/8" in from top and sides of flag at the top.

The iris folding technique can be used with all sorts of shapes, from fruits, to flowers to birds, you name it. Hope you give it a try.

Wishing you the Luck O' the Irish!



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