

Tartan Mini Stockings: Update

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Originally posted 2025 November 21

It's more than 10 years since I stitched the first Plaid Mini Stocking ornament, meant to echo my own childhood Christmas stocking. To imitate the Christmas plaid, I stitched a criss-cross pattern on felt. Adorable!

Since then, I've had it in the back of my mind to try replicating actual tartan patterns, but I didn't act on

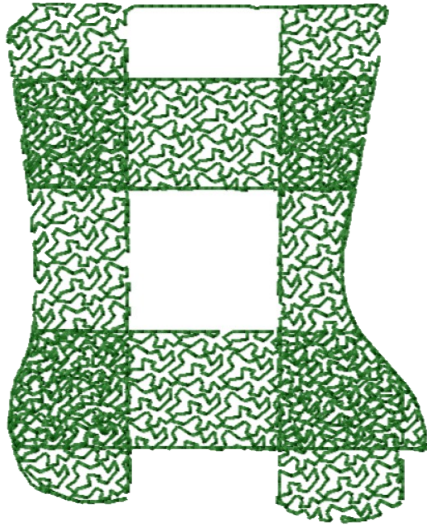
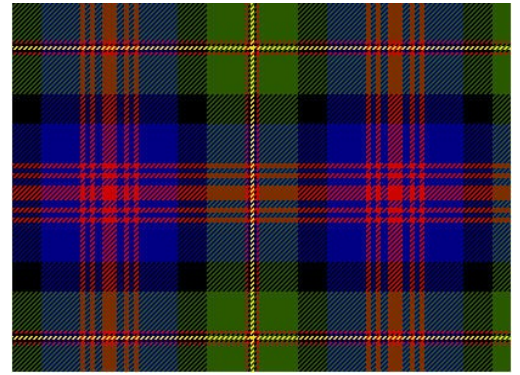
the thought until about 18 months ago, when I digitized one in the Cape Breton tartan. I intended to also make some in the Nova Scotia tartan that I digitized

at the same time, but my machine was out of commission for several weeks, and once I got it up and running again, other projects nudged the little tartan socks off the agenda.

When my new embroidery machine arrived and I had a chance again to play with new project ideas, my thoughts returned to the tartan mini stockings. I had still to stitch out the Nova Scotia tartan version that I'd digitized so long back, and I had several other tartans that I also wanted to try out. Tartans vary quite a bit in complexity, and I expected some challenges along the way.

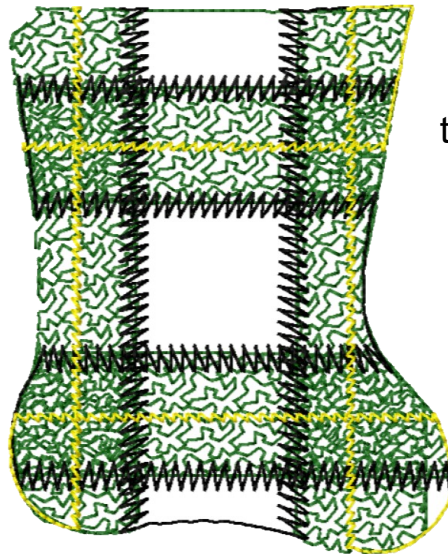


I wasn't wrong. I started with my own family tartan, which has a somewhat more complex pattern. In particular, I needed a way to capture the wide stripe of green that forms the first layer on top of the blue felt background. While thinner stripes can be replicated using a satin stitch, the wider ones really can't.

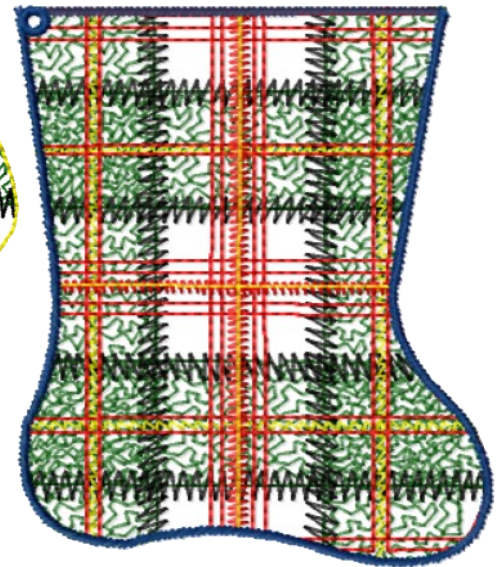


After experimenting with various fills, I settled on this all-over motif stitch to form the wide stripe: it fills in the background enough to establish the colour (in this case, the green), but it still allows the foundation (blue) to show through. It turned out to be just what I needed.

The tartan is built by laying down the various strips of colour, much as it is in the weaving process.



I followed up the green with the narrower stripes in various widths of zigzag.



The first stitch-out of my family tartan turned out pretty well: I really like the way that all-over motif stitch captures the wide stripe in the tartan fabric. The most complicated part of making these will be in selecting the correct shades of felt and thread.

Next, I revisited the Nova Scotia tartan stocking that I had digitized previously. I had never actually stitched it out, and when I looked again at the design image, I found that I wasn't crazy about the scale of the design.



In revising it, I decided to go with a larger scale, once again using the motif stitch to lay down the first (black) stripe in the design, then overlaying it with the remaining narrow stripes, just as I had for my family design. The stitch-out looks pretty good to me, and the tartan is plainly recognizable, which is the most important element of this design.

I mentioned already that the authentic look of these little tartan stockings depends on choosing the right shade of felt; this stitch-out of the Saskatchewan tartan version is a case in point: although the sett looks good, the yellow foundation is way too bright.



I have a large store of felt in shades of yellow, but I just did not have the right dark gold colour, so I went with the closest one in my stash. I like it okay, but it really should be darker, as in the view at left. To get this shade, I dyed the the bright yellow using diluted brown acrylic paint, to produce a more muted shade, which is closer to the actual tartan.

I'm learning a lot by making these tartan Mini Stocking ornaments, and – just as important – I'm also having fun. Now all I have to do is figure out what toys should go into them. Stay tuned.