

Scrappy Sister's Choice Blocks!

or what to do with an overflowing bin of 2 1/2" scrap strips!



Maybe you are in the same situation I am. I confess to being a fairly organized quilter, who trims leftovers down into useable sizes for scrap projects. If anything can be used, I hate to throw it out! However, after cutting down the remainders of quilt backings, left over border pieces, odds and ends left from Fat Quarters or other yardage, and throwing in leftover binding strips...I am overflowing! I have bins of different sizes of 1 1/2", 2", 2 1/2", 3", and 3 1/2". By FAR the most overflowing is the 2 1/2" bin!

I decided on the Sister's Choice block as a good candidate for this project because of the appealing 9 patch center, and the fact that I could cut EVERY piece from the same width of strips.

Instructions are for a 10" block.



I planned on doing all different 2-tone nine-patches in the block centers...but since I was using stuff ONLY from the scrap bin, I decided to pull out all the neutrals I had in there, from white to tan to use as the background pieces. I cut these up into piles of 2 1/2" X 6 1/2" rectangles and cutting the rest into 2 1/2" squares. the one unifying thing I am doing with the blocks is to use all GREEN as the star points. So, I pulled out the greens and cut them all up into 2 1/2" squares. The only rule I used is I am planning on having all 8 star points in the block match, so there needed to be at least a long enough green strip to cut 8 squares.

Then I went fishing for the 9 patch fabrics! You could do this one at a time, or do as I did, spend an evening playing match up!

Now, if you are like me.... you love quick strip piecing techniques and hate template patterns where everything is a separate piece! There has to be an easier way but strip pieced methods for 9 patches usually involve 2 separate strip sets and make several blocks of one kind. What to do when piecing one nine-patch block for the block center? Simple. I made this easy for me!



For the 9 patch pieces I laid right sides together the two fabrics I wanted for the nine-patch center. Cut these strips 2 1/2" X 11" long. Then, depending on which fabric is your corner fabric for the nine-patch, cut one extra 2 1/2" square from that fabric.



This is what you need to complete one block:
 (2) 2 1/2" X 11" strips for nine-patch center + (1) 2 1/2" square for the final corner.
 (in this case it's the yellow square at the top left)
 (4) 2 1/2" neutral squares for block corners
 (4) 2 1/2" X 6 1/2" neutral rectangles for block sides
 (8) 2 1/2" Squares of green for the star points.

Now before I go any farther, I want to tell you about another little trick I'm implementing....I learned a long time ago to use a scrap piece of fabric to sew on and off of so I don't have thread tails everywhere, and it keeps the pieces from being sucked down into the needle hole. But now, instead of using just a scrap and sewing on and off of it again and again until it is full of thread, I cut a bunch of 2" squares in different neutrals and blues...and am using THESE as the leader pieces, sewing them into pairs, and then into 4 patches as I go...so as a bonus, I have a continually growing pile of little 3 1/2" 4 patch blocks! :c)



But I digress! Back to the Sister's Choice Block!

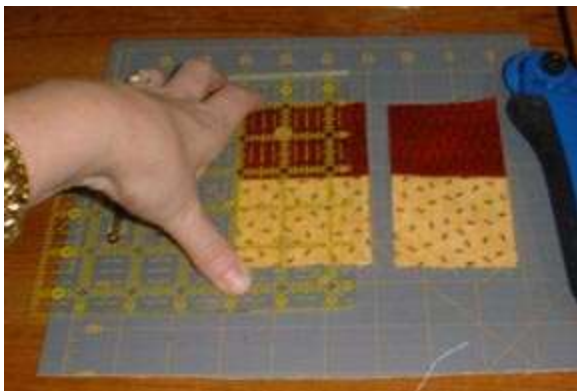
The first thing you are going to do is stitch your 11" X 2 1/2" rectangles with right sides together, using a scant 1/4" seam allowance and then stitch another pair of leader squares through the machine (if you are doing this along with me) and snip the long strip apart from the leader squares, just behind the presser foot.

I keep a little pair of spring snips right there on the machine bed just for this purpose.





Press your strip set with seam allowance going towards the darker fabric. If you started your sewing with a pair of leader squares, press this open to the dark too, and set it aside to match with another pair to be made into a 4 patch.



Another tip...when a cutting mat is no longer useable, I cut a corner out of it to use near my machine so I don't have to get up and down so much.

Fold the strip set in half, trim up the ends, and cut two sections each 2 1/2" wide. This will give you 4 pairs of squares.



Lay out your nine-patch center as shown above...using the spare 2 1/2" square to fill in the bottom corner. Assemble by rows into a completed 9 patch. Set it aside.

Star points! This involves a method I call 'flippy corners'....





(see my leader squares still leading off and ending each sequence of stitching as I go?)

Draw a diagonal line from corner to corner on the back of each star-point square. Place one green 2 1/2" square on top of one of the 2 1/2" X 6 1/2" rectangles as shown with right sides together. Stich just NEXT to the line, toward the corner you are cutting off, allowing the fabric to FOLD on the line you drew.

Without cutting threads, sew the next rectangle and square through the machine, chain piecing all 4 of them in the same manner. End the sequence by sending another pair of leader squares through the machine, snipping off the rectangles just behind the leader squares. Now trim the excess approx 1/4" from the seam line. Press towards the dark triangles.

Now for the other end! This is where it is important to watch which angle you are sewing.... we want these points to 'V' from each other. If you sew the second triangle on the diagonal the wrong direction, you'll have a parallelogram for a background instead of a trapezoid.

Sew all 4 remaining star points this way. Trim and press as above. Now we are getting somewhere, and it is starting to look like a real block!



Lay your block with the nine-patch in the center, the rectangles on each side, filling in your corners with the 2 1/2" squares. Assemble into rows, stitching the rows together to complete one block.

(is your pile of 4 patches also growing?)



This is my pile of 4 patches just since starting this project!

I've so far made 20 sister's choice blocks. It isn't making a huge dent in the scrap strip bin, but I

am really liking how the blocks look when laid out together. The multi-fabric background just gives it so much more depth and interest than just using one fabric. Give it a try!



April 19th, 2004

The pile of blocks is now a TOP!

I set 72 blocks 8 X 9 for a quilt center that measured 80 X90 before borders.

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