

REGAL AUTUMN

A Free Chart by Debbie Rowley

Regal Autumn is a design based on a traditional quilt block. Most quilt blocks are composed of squares, rectangles and triangles, which makes them perfect to translate to counted needlepoint.

First a few basics about stitching, then we'll start the diagrams for Regal Autumn.

Preparing threads for stitching:

I strongly recommend a thread management system because there are a lot of threads in the project, and it's easy to get things messed up quickly. I use FlossAway bags, and put each thread in its own bag. I don't label the bags because I can easily see through them to see the thread color and number. Snack size zip top bags also work well. You can also use thread drops if you prefer.

Presencia floss pulls from the end with the longest wrapper. There are two cut ends. I gently tug on both of them (one at a time) until I feel the thread pulling easily; pull that thread and not the other one. Presencia floss separates into 6 strands. After cutting a length, gently tap on the end of the threads until you can see the separate strands. Grasp one of the strands with the fingers of one hand, and with the other hand slide the rest of the strands down. Separate all the strands you need for stitching, and recombine them before threading the needle. Don't cut all the thread at once, but only as you need it.

The Kreinik metallic reel has ends that pop up so you can release the end of the thread. Pull off the length that you need, then gently stretch the thread before threading the needle. This helps to relax the curls and makes it easier to stitch. You can wind the cut end of the reel back around the end of the reel, then pop the lid back down to keep the thread from unwinding further. The metallic is non-divisible and used as it comes from the reel.

Presencia pearl cotton is a little tricky to get started. When you look at the wraps around the ball, you should be able to see a tighter thread that dives under the wraps, usually at the top edge. I take the tip of a needle and gently pry until the end comes loose, then I can unwrap the thread as needed. If I can't find the free end, I just cut one of the wrapped threads to get the ball started.

The Rainbow Gallery threads used in this design are to be used as they come from the cards, non-divisible. I recommend a mini-flat iron for the Neon Rays, but not for the other Rainbow Gallery threads. As a general rule, only iron flat ribbons and threads, and not round threads or you'll disturb the integrity of the thread.

The Caron Collection Watercolours I'm using is a heavy overdye cotton. It separates into 3 strands, and stitch with only one strand at a time. As a general rule I cut off 36" at a time. The skein opens into a loop, and when fully opened the loop is 36". I unwind one length from the loop, cut that one length, leaving the rest of the skein intact. Separate out one strand for stitching and save the rest for the next time you'll need the Watercolours.

Of course, feel free to use any threads you want, any colors you want, as you interpret this project. Other threads than the ones I'm using will work just fine.

For more information on these threads, you can refer to the video on my website under Video Classes—Square 1. The first few lessons cover how to mount the canvas, thread management, threading the needle, using a laying tool and other useful general tips. You do not need to register for Square 1 to view these videos, but they are there if you need additional info for getting started.

Preparing the canvas:

Cover the edges of the canvas with tape or bias tape before mounting to the canvas. This will protect the threads and keep them from snagging on the edges of the canvas as you stitch.

You may stitch with the canvas on top of the bars or under the bars, however you prefer; either way is fine. The canvas needs to be mounted to stretcher bars before stitching. Begin by assembling the stretcher bars into a square. Place the prepared canvas on the bars. Tack or staple the center of each side, then work out from the center fastener, placing tacks or staples no more than 1/2" apart. This helps to keep the canvas square and makes it easier for finishing. Work on each side alternately—place fasteners at the top and bottom working out from the center, then the sides, stretching the canvas as you fasten it as tightly as you can. Do not fasten all of one side, then the next side, then the next. You'll be able to keep the canvas tighter and squarer by working alternately. Again, you can refer to one of my videos for Square 1 if you need more info.

I recommend using a stitching frame (Lowery, System 4, K's) to hold the canvas as you stitch so you have both hands free for stitching. If you don't have a frame, you can use clamps to hold the canvas to the edge of a table, or frame weights placed on the corners to hold it securely to the table.

Tools:

You'll need a laying tool. This can be a trolley needle worn on a finger (any finger, either hand, just whatever is comfortable for you), a laying tool, a tekobari, or even just a large needle or toothpick, so long as it is comfortable for you and smooth so it doesn't snag the threads.

I have two pairs of scissors, one for cutting regular threads, one for cutting metallic threads. The scissors for metallic threads has a serrated edge that helps to keep the metallic threads from slipping as you cut. I try not to use my really good scissors for cutting metallics so I can preserve the edge. If you don't have a pair of scissors for metallics, you can use inexpensive scissors that you keep for cutting metallics, and replace them inexpensively as needed.

Starting and stopping threads:

I use a pin stitch as much as possible. A pin stitch can be a single stitch 3 times over the same canvas thread, or in the shape of an "L" or a "T". I make my pin stitches from the front of the canvas. I enter the canvas, holding on to the free end, make my pin stitch, then snip off the thread.

You can also use a loop start if you are using an even number of strands. If you are using a loop start, cut the thread twice as long as you need. Separate the strand or strands needed. Fold the strand in half, then thread the needle, leaving a loop at one end. From the front of the canvas, enter the canvas, leaving the loop on top. Bring the needle up one canvas thread from the loop, pass the needle through the loop, then enter the canvas again, pulling the loop to the back. Only make a loop start over a single canvas thread, not the length of the first stitch (unless it's over a single canvas thread). Trying to make the loop start over more than one canvas thread makes the thread hard to control. If the first stitch is longer than a single canvas thread, place the loop where the first stitch will cover it, but not at the beginning or end of the stitch.

You can also use an away knot if you prefer. Make a knot in the end of the thread, then enter the canvas from the front, leaving the loop on top of the canvas. Place the knot so you are stitching toward it, covering the tail of the thread as you stitch to secure the thread. When you come to the knot, snip it off.

To end the thread, I use a pin stitch as much as possible. I gently move the stitches aside until I can see the canvas underneath, make a pin stitch from the front going twice over the same canvas thread, then snip off the thread (this can be on top of the canvas if you're very careful, or under the canvas if you prefer). Smooth the stitched threads over the pin stitch.

If you would rather, you can bring the end of the thread to the front of the canvas, then stitch over it, kind of like a reverse away knot.

You can also weave the thread through the backs of the stitches. In this project, a lot of the stitches have very long threads on the back, or very little on the back, which will not secure the threads. It can also disturb the stitching on the front. I only use this method as a last resort, preferring to use a pin stitch instead.

For more information on starting and stopping threads, including using a pin stitch, please refer to the Square 1 videos on my website.

With all the basics out of the way, let's tackle Regal Autumn.

Center Motif

I started in the center of the canvas, with the center motif. The center motif is a Milanese pinwheel, with half and quarter eyelets, small scotch stitches and giant scotch stitches. The diagrams will show the basic stitches, then where they are in the project in colors that closely approximate the colors I'm using in the design. The overdyed thread is shown in gray because I can't portray the overdyed colors.

Find the approximate center of the design. It isn't necessary to have the exact center. The first stitch in the Milanese pinwheel is slightly offset from the center, for a reason I'll explain later. Anchor with a pin stitch in the shape of a "T" close to the center but not in the center. I anchor both threads I'm using at the same time.

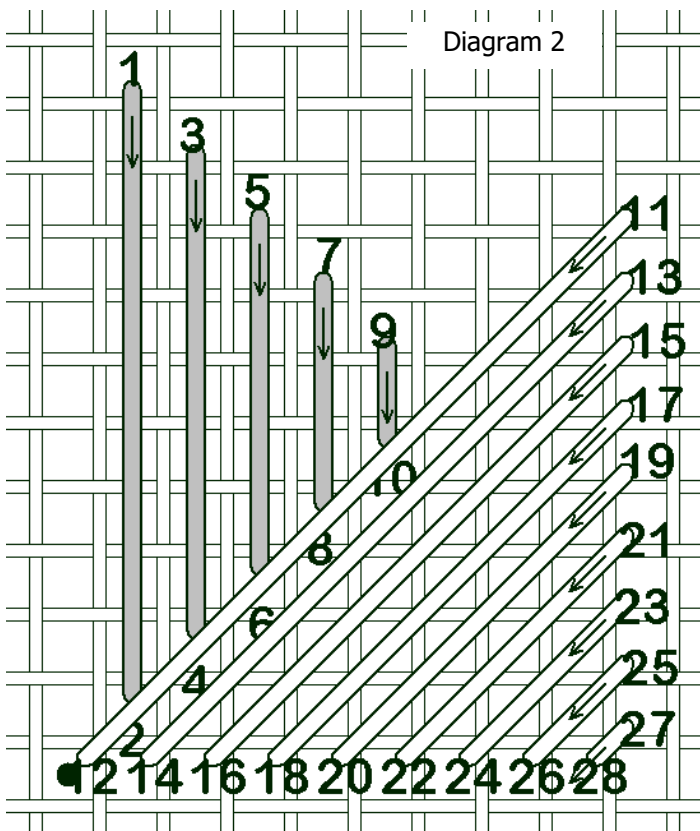
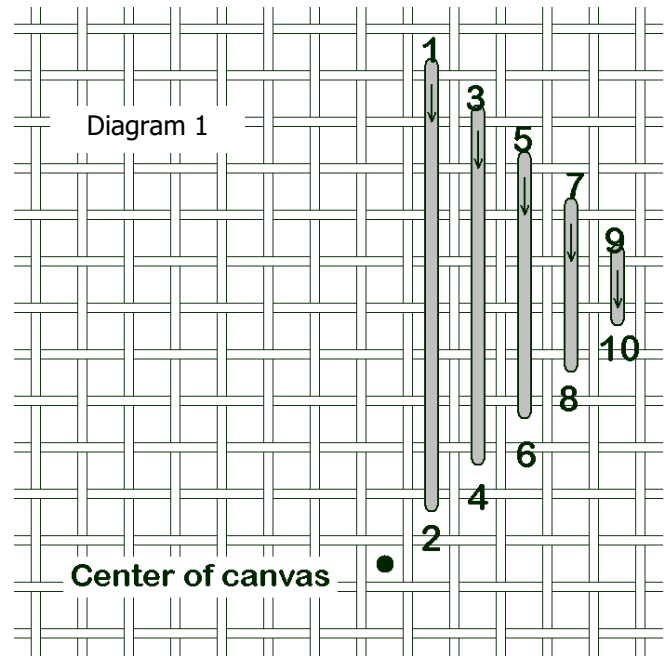
Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
Rayon ribbon	Rainbow Gallery Neon Rays N25 Brick Red	
Rayon ribbon	Rainbow Gallery Neon Rays N108 Yellow Orange	

I anchored both of the threads at the same before I began stitching. It will take about 24" of the first one, and about 36" of the second one, to stitch the entire Milanese pinwheel.

You may want to slightly enlarge the center hole, because there will be 8 threads in that hole when completed. To enlarge the center hole, take your needle and very gently swirl it around the hole in the canvas. Don't be too aggressive, it just needs to be a little bit larger.

Now with the first thread listed, take the first stitches shown in Diagram 1. The center of the canvas is marked with a circle. Notice that the first stitch does not end in the center of the canvas.

After taking these stitches, park the needle. I usually bring the needle up where I'll need it next; for this thread that will be 12 canvas threads to the right of the center.

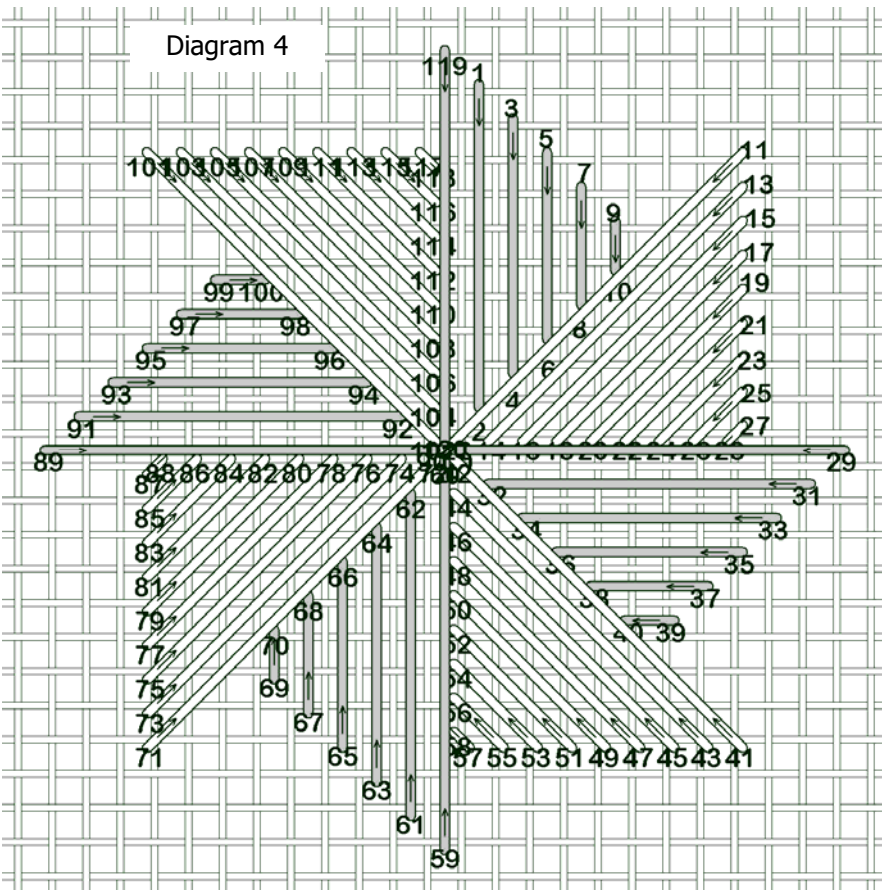
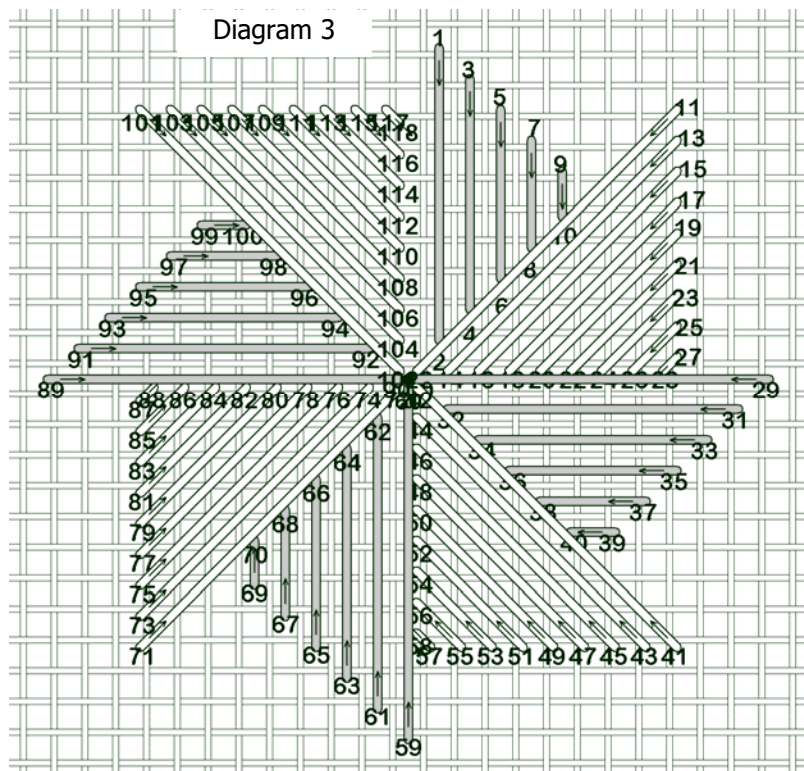


Now pick up the second thread and stitch as shown in Diagram 2. See how the first stitch with this thread covers the end points of the first stitches? It can be very difficult to find where to place the needle under a thread that's laying on the canvas, much easier to just lay it on top of the end points.

After stitching these stitches, park the needle where you'll need this thread next—bring the needle up 10 canvas below the start of the last stitch with this thread.

Parking the needle where you'll need it next prevents the thread getting tangled on the back of the canvas, or stitching over it and having to un-stitch to free the thread when you need it.

Continue stitching around as shown in Diagram 3, alternating the threads. All of the straight stitches are with the first thread, and all of the diagonal stitches are with the second thread.



Finish the Milanese pinwheel by taking the longest stitch with the first thread, shown in Diagram 4. Saving this stitch for last is easier than ending 9 stitches under it if it were already in place.

This is close to what the Milanese pinwheel will look like when finished.

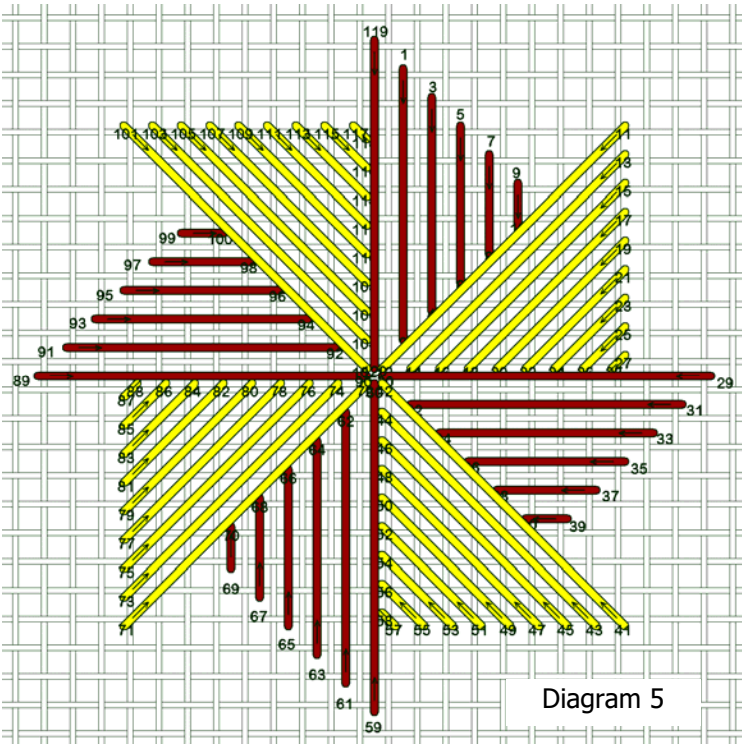


Diagram 5

Half and quarter eyelets

Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
Twisted rayon	Rainbow Gallery Panache PN23 Forest Green	

Now stitch half and quarter eyelets around the Milanese pinwheel with the twisted rayon. It took about 18" to stitch all of them.

When stitching eyelets, bring the needle up along the outside edges and end in the shared hole. If you want to pull to make the hole a little larger, pull gently as you bring the needle up to begin the next stitch, not as you take the needle down to end a stitch. Pulling as you bring the needle up will

open holes in the center;
pulling as you take the needle down will open holes along the outside edge.

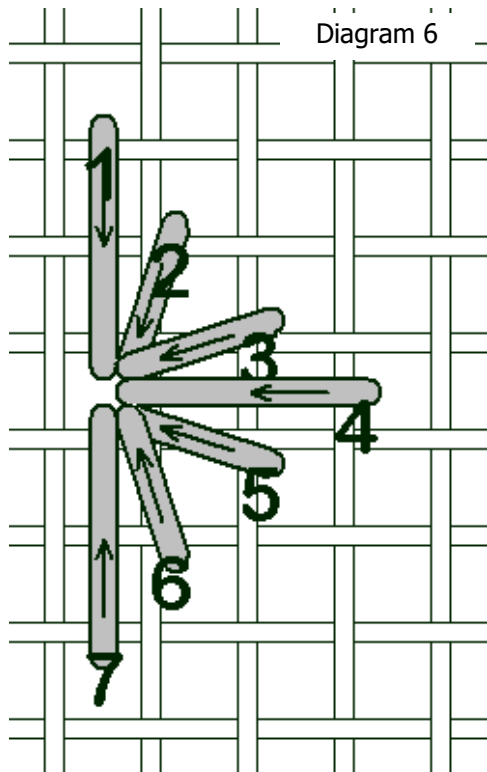


Diagram 6

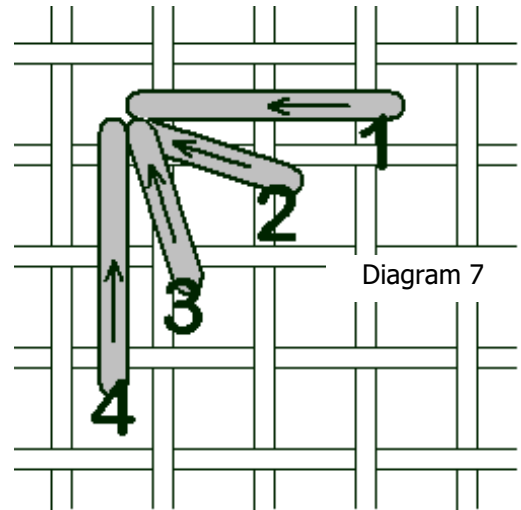


Diagram 7

Diagram 8 shows the placement for the half and quarter eyelets.

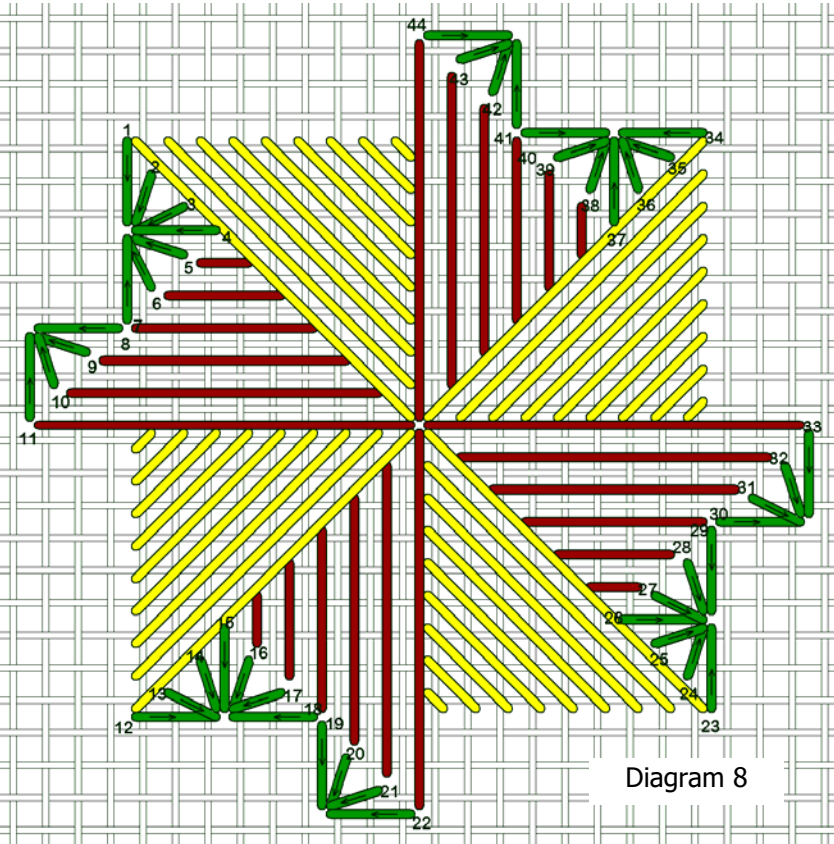


Diagram 8

Small scotch stitches

Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
Overdyed heavy cotton	Caron Collection Watercolours 238 Glowing Embers (1)	

Separate out and use 1 strand of the heavy cotton for the small scotch stitches.
Stitch as shown in Diagram 9.

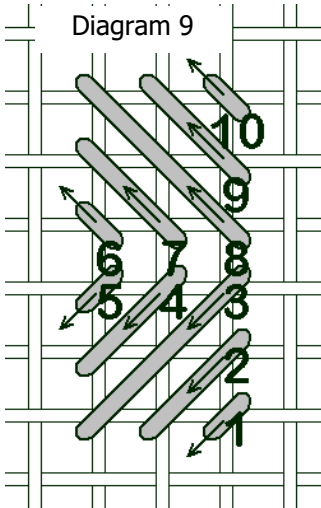


Diagram 9

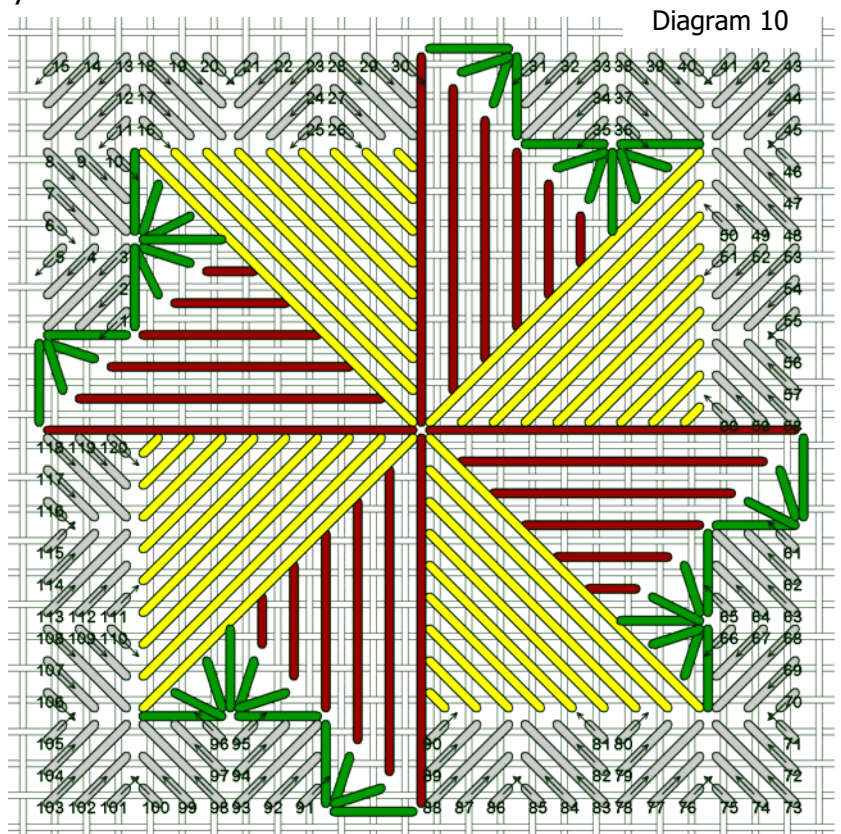
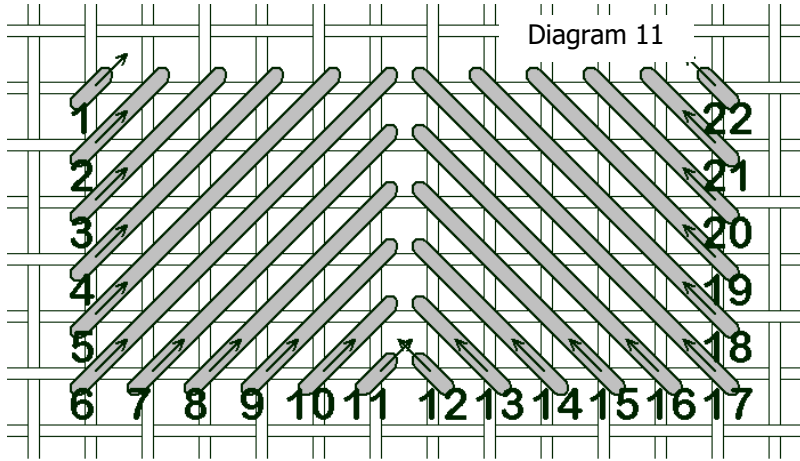


Diagram 10

Giant Scotch

Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
Cotton floss	Presencia 3324 Navy Blue (3)	

Use 3 strands of floss for the giant scotch stitches. Stitch as shown in Diagram 11. There are 6 giant scotch stitches on each side of the center motif.



This is all of the center motif.

