

2026 Stitch Along

By Debbie Rowley

The start of the new year is the perfect time to begin a new project! There's nothing like staring at a blank canvas and envisioning the magic about to happen, when colorful threads and interesting stitches are applied!

For this Stitch Along, I decided to choose threads as I go. This is a somewhat scary departure from the way I usually do things, so bear with me! I have designed the first few elements, and picked the first threads, but I haven't gotten beyond that.

If you're like me, you have a LOT of stash threads: threads left over from other projects, threads you picked up along the way because you liked the feel or color, or even entire lines of threads (raising my hand here but it's kind of essential that my stash is deep). I challenge you to stitch from stash for this project if you like, but I'm also a master enabler - go shopping if you want!

As we move along, I'll suggest a thread type, but feel to change these, and the specific thread I used for the project. For the first stitches, I selected a Gloriana silk floss, so let's dive in!

I am using white 18 ct. Mono deluxe canvas, 12" x 12", mounted on two pairs of 12" stretcher bars. I don't know what the finished size will be yet, but it will not exceed 6" square.

Braided Heart

Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
36"-40"	Stranded floss	Gloriana 12 Strand Silk Floss 083 Blossoms (2)	

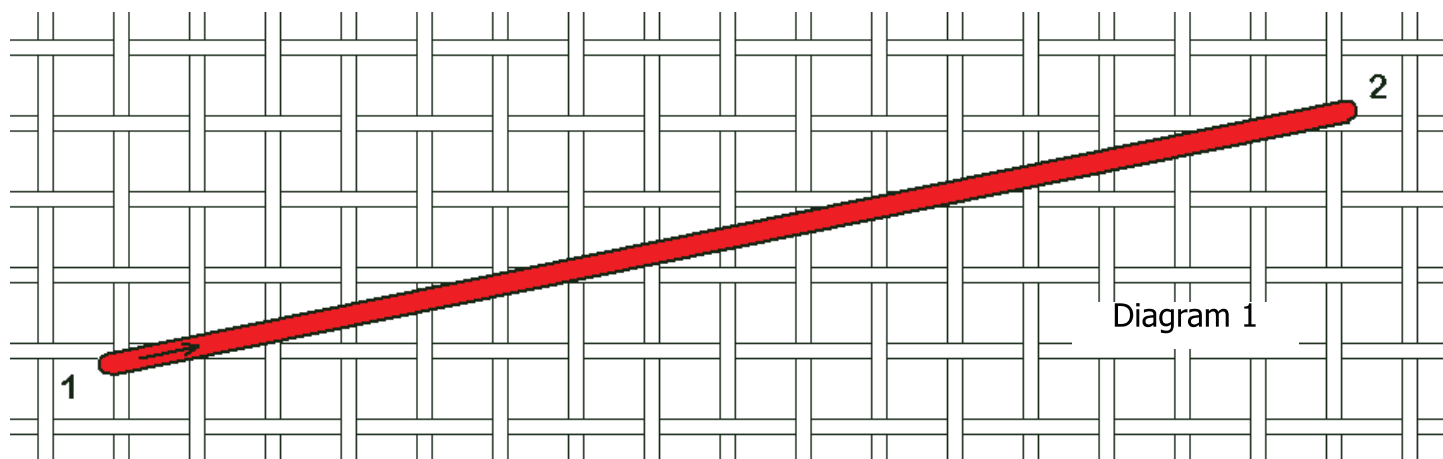
A bit of info about the thread first. I had ordered in the entire line of Gloriana Silk Floss, but haven't had much chance to stitch with it. The colors are so yummy! And it feels divine to stitch with. It's a 12 strand floss, and generally you don't stitch with all 12 strands as it comes. For the first stitches, I'm using 2 strands. To separate the strands, tap the cut end until the strands separate, then grasp one strand with one hand and slide the rest of the skein down with the other hand. Do this for the number of strands you want to use, then recombine before threading the needle. With an overdyed thread like this one, keep the color changes going the same way. For solid colors you can flip the ends, which seems to keep the strands separated a bit better.

About the stitch: I have so many volumes of stitch reference books and refer to them frequently. I like apps that I can keep on my phone and look things up quickly. One of my phone apps is Shapes of Stitches by Sandra Arthur. Two of the volumes were released as apps, and I do have all four of the books. They are excellent references. I came across this braided heart diagram, and it's not a heart shape I've used before, so I started with this one.

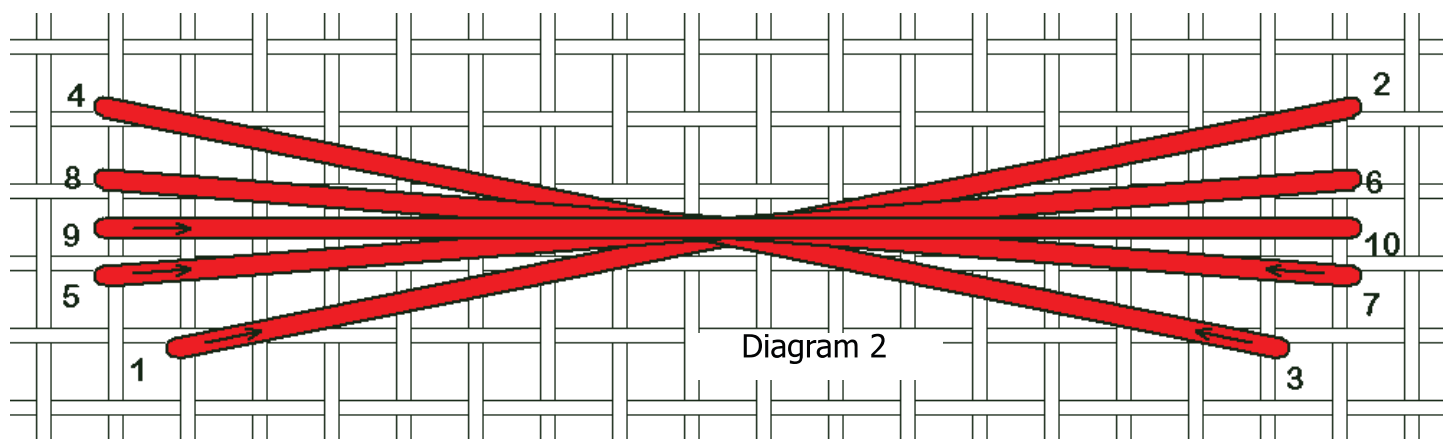
Anchor your thread with a pin stitch or an away knot. If you choose to use a pin stitch (which I almost always do), find the center of the canvas, then count up about 9 canvas threads, and make the pin stitch there. It should be nicely covered by the stitches when completed. I also end with a pin stitch usually, and in this case it's the best way to end since it's more secure than weaving into the backs of the stitches - these are long stitches on the front and back, and weaving in will not be secure. To end with a pin stitch, from the front gently move the stitches aside, close to the center of the heart. Make the pin stitch from the front, then snip off the thread and move the stitches back over the pin stitch.

The diagram begins on the next page.

From the center of the canvas (this can be approximate) count up 8 canvas threads, and 8 canvas threads to the left; bring the needle up here for the first stitch. The first stitch covers 17 vertical threads and 4 horizontal threads; end the first stitch here.



Continue as shown in Diagram 2, with the long mostly horizontal stitches.



The diagram continues on the next page.

Now let's make some mostly vertical stitches. The next two stitches will begin in the same shared hole, and end in different holes. Bring the needle up in the center of the canvas (this is 8 canvas threads below position 1 and 8 canvas threads to the right of position 1 in the first diagram). This stitch will end 13 canvas above 11 and 1 to the left, the next stitch will end 13 canvas threads above 13 and 1 to the right, leaving a gap of 2 canvas threads between positions 12 and 14.

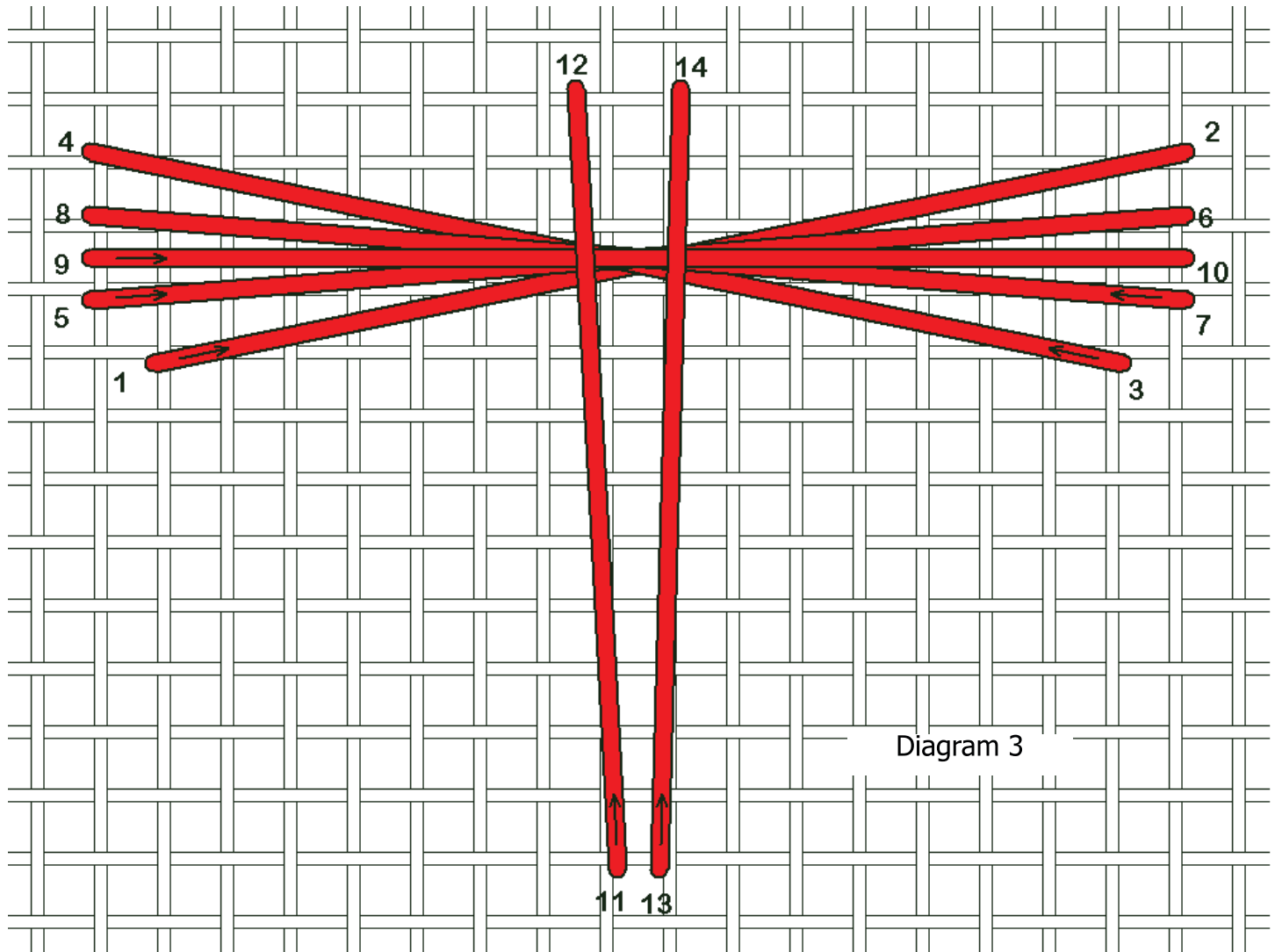
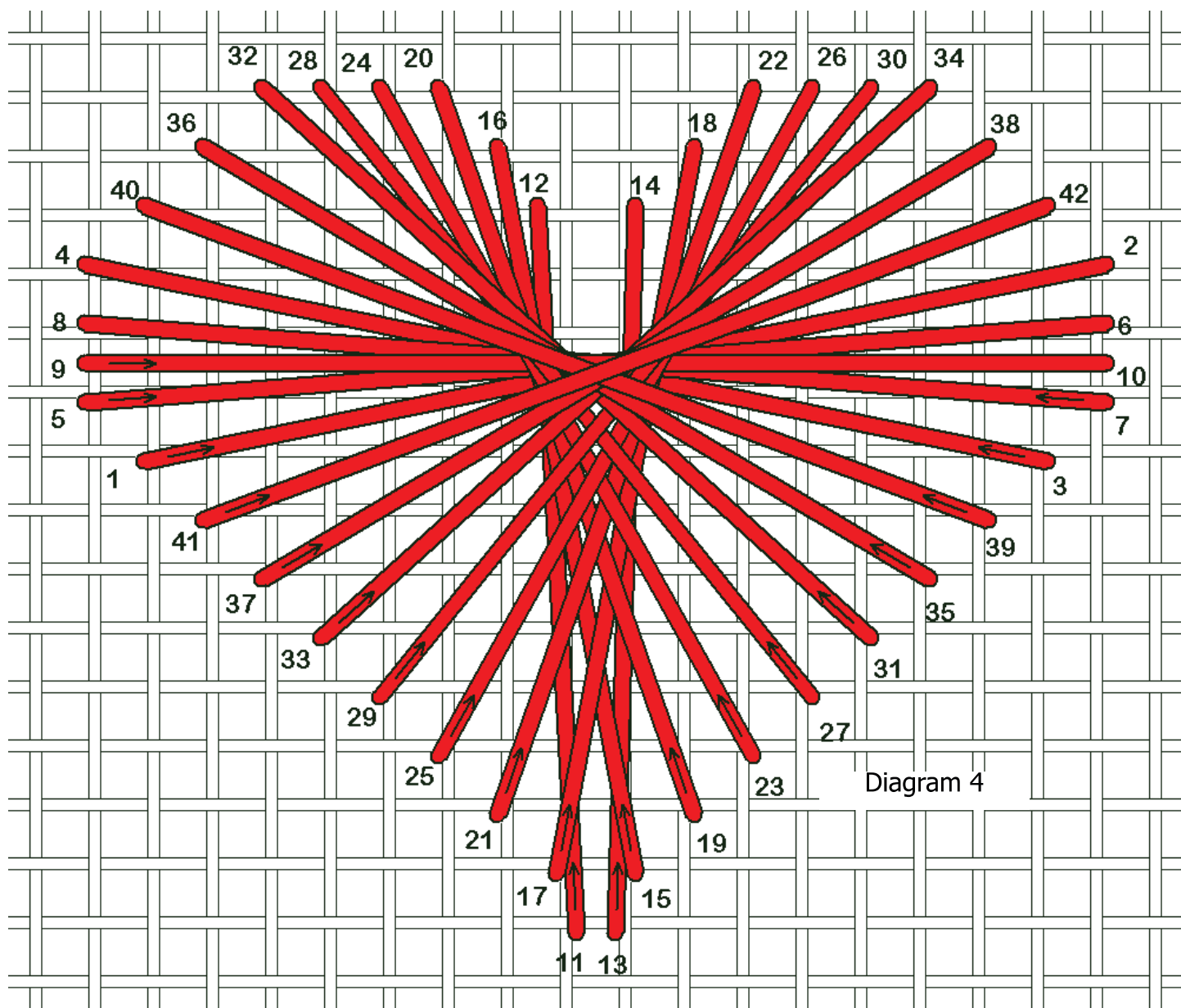


Diagram 3

The diagram continues on the next page.

Now finish the heart shown in Diagram 4. The end points follow along in adjacent diagonal holes for the most part, so no need to do a lot of heavy counting.



End off the thread, and start a new length for the remaining hearts.

Stitch three more braided hearts, sharing holes along the diagonal edges as shown in Diagram 5. You may find it helpful to turn the canvas as you stitch, so you are stitching the same orientation as before.

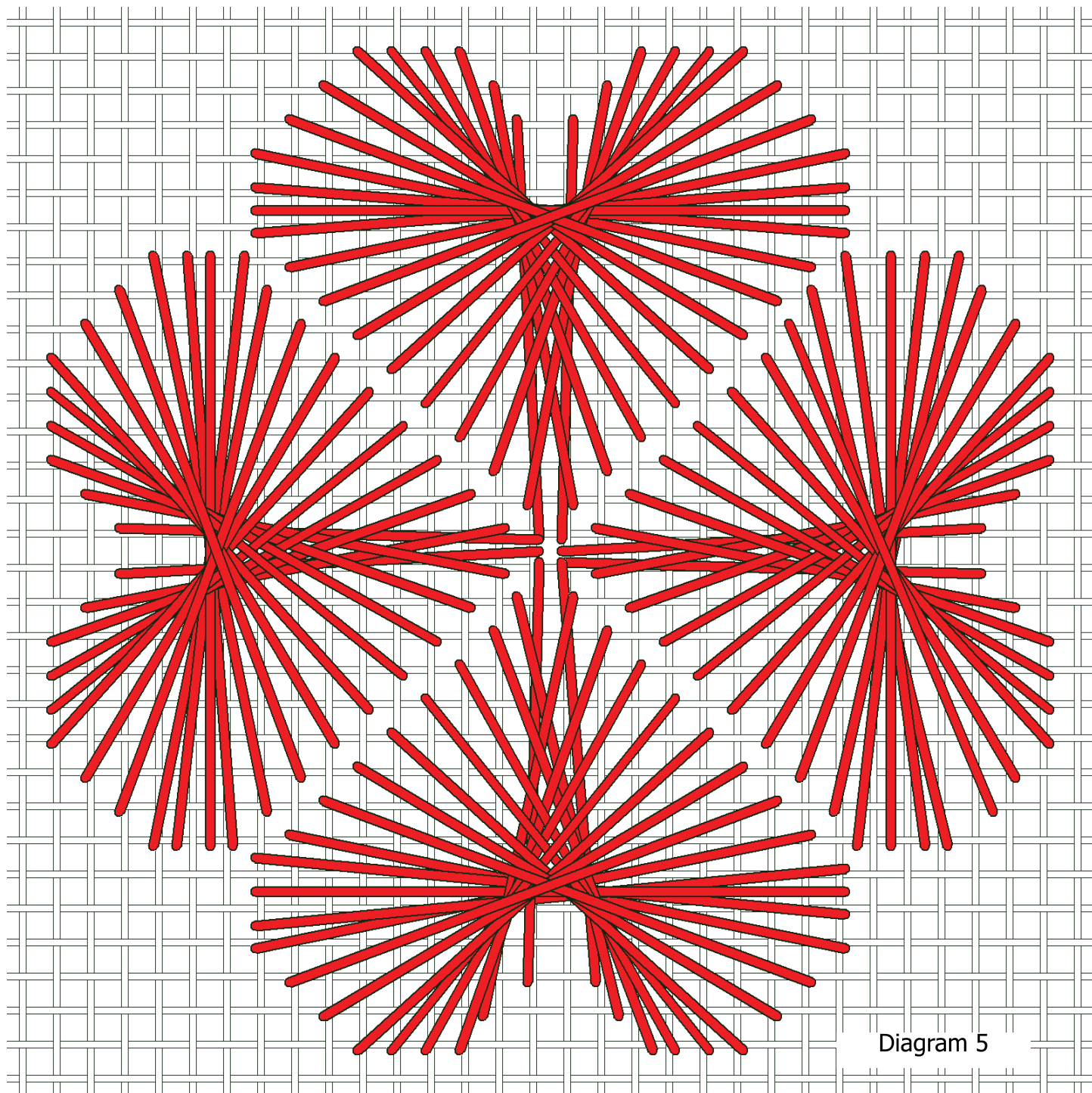


Diagram 5

We're off to a good start!

Amadeus

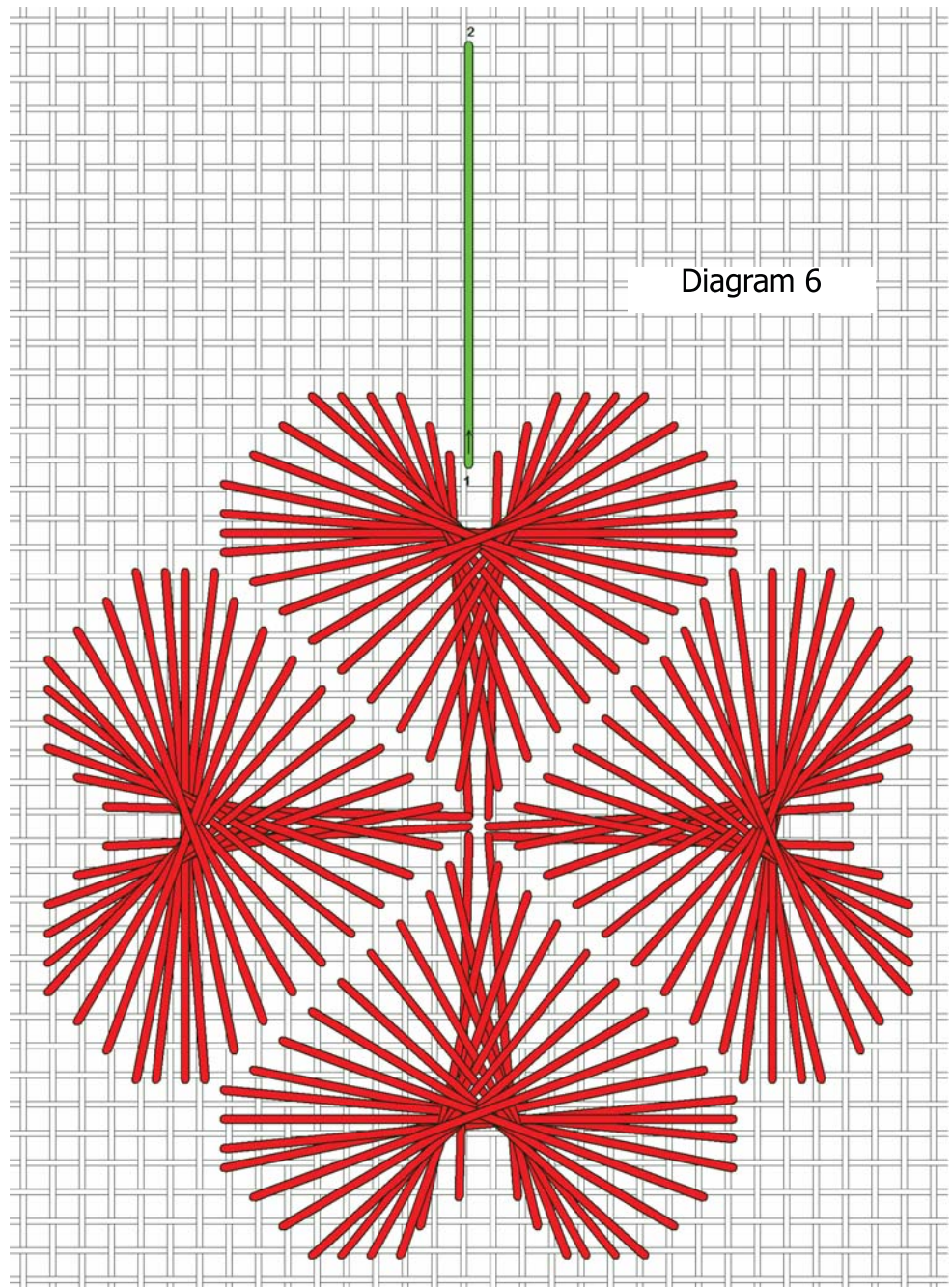
Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
36"-40"	Stranded floss	Gloriana 12 Strand Silk Floss 014 Jewel Green (2)	

With our center firmly established, let's branch out a bit. In my head I had a kind of abstract flower motif, so with that in mind I decided to a stitch that can mimic the calyx and stem of a flower. An Amadeus stitch is a beautiful stitch principle more than a specific stitch - there are hundreds of variations of Amadeus stitches. This is just one.

Amadeus stitches are characterized by an establishing stitch, then all remaining stitches made over that stitch. It is generally not a woven stitch; all of the stitches lay one after the other. In this example the Amadeus is sharing holes with the braided heart stitches.

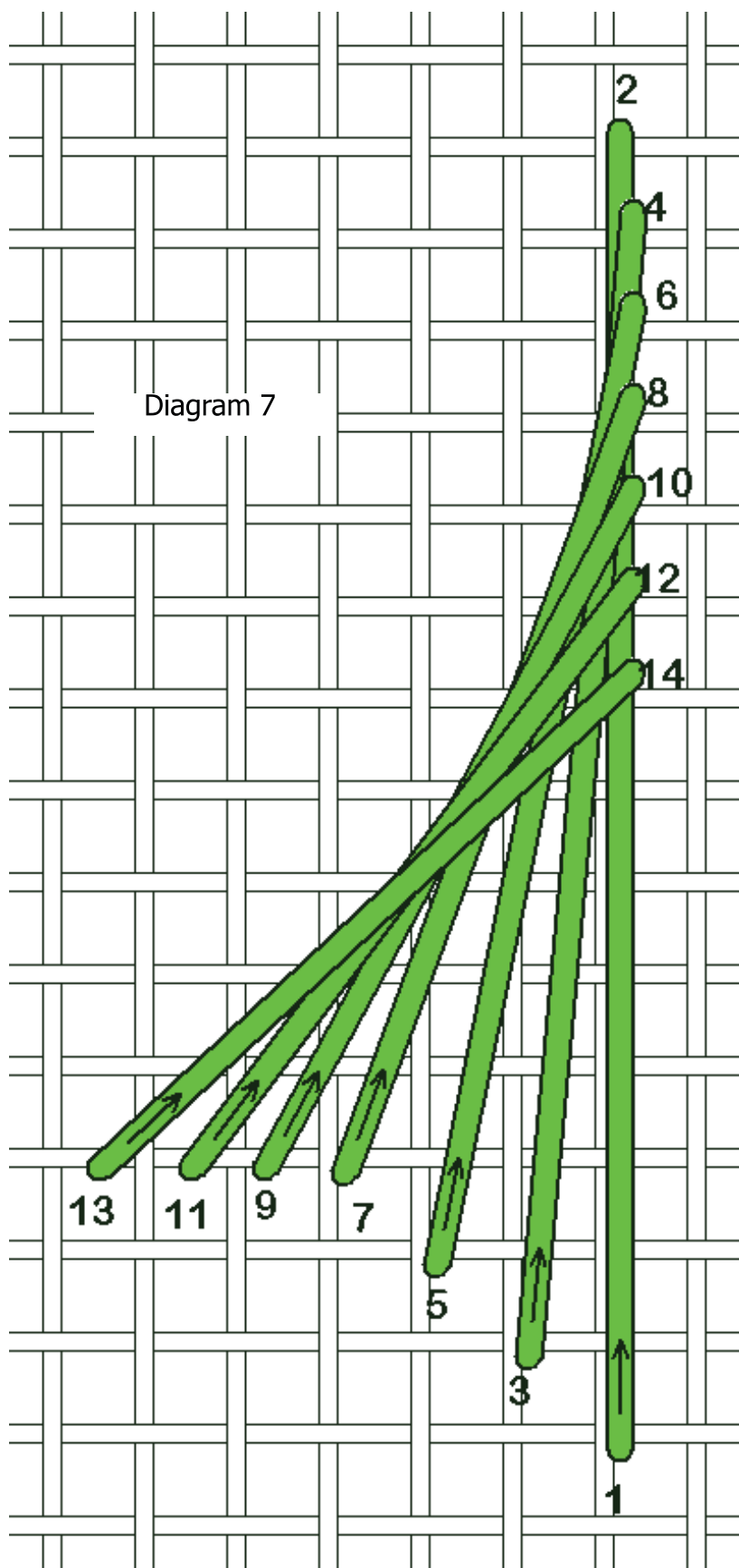
Anchor with a pin stitch, placed where it will not be in the stitching channel and will be covered by the stitches. I end off the same way, moving the threads aside until I can see the canvas underneath, then making my pin stitch from the front, and snipping off the excess thread. After snipping I smooth the stitches back in place, making a virtually invisible anchor.

Begin as shown in Diagram 6. The first stitch covers 15 horizontal canvas threads. For the next stitches I won't show the braided hearts so I can enlarge the Amadeus diagrams.

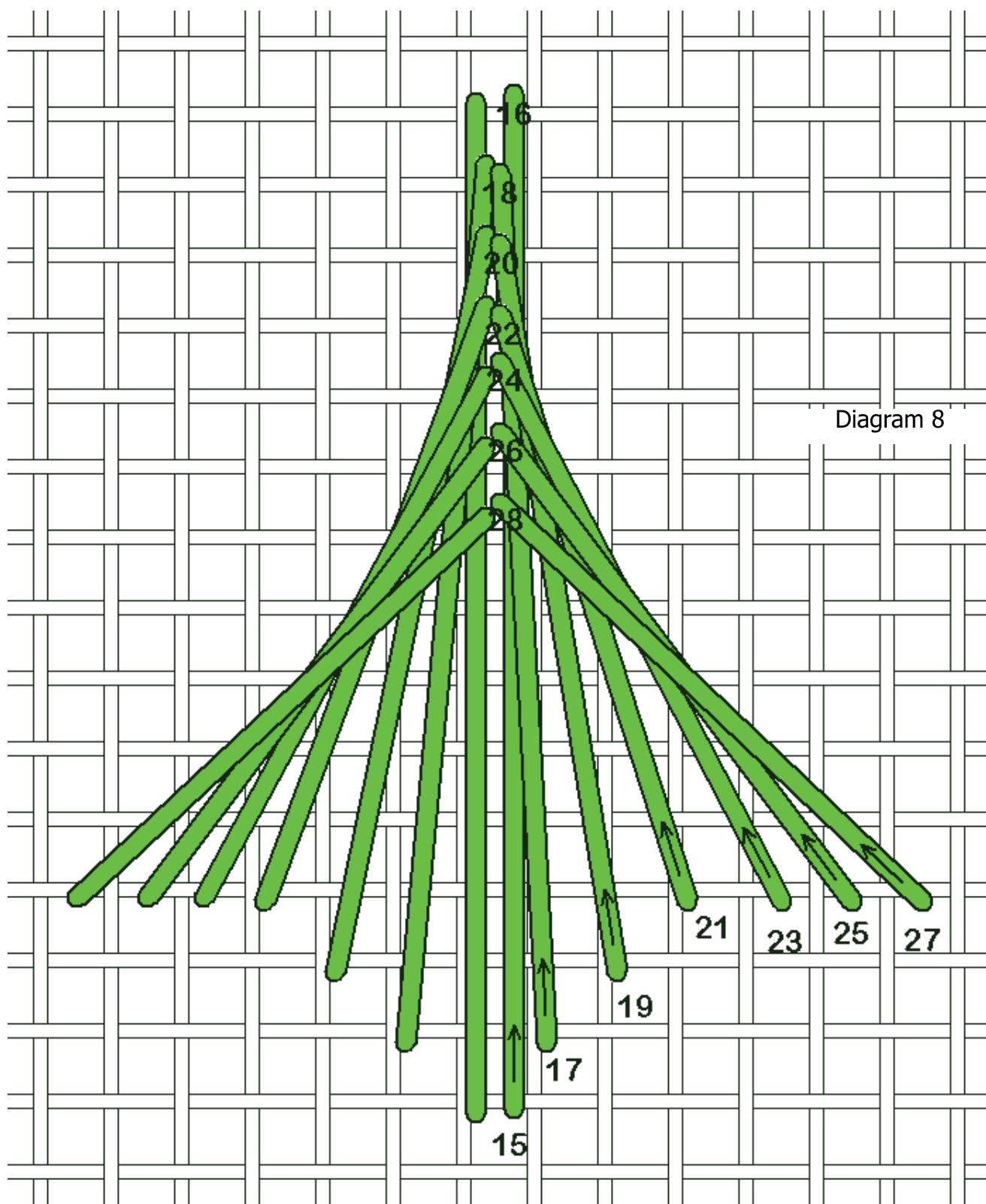


Continue as shown in Diagram 7, with the stitches ending over the first stitch in adjacent holes.

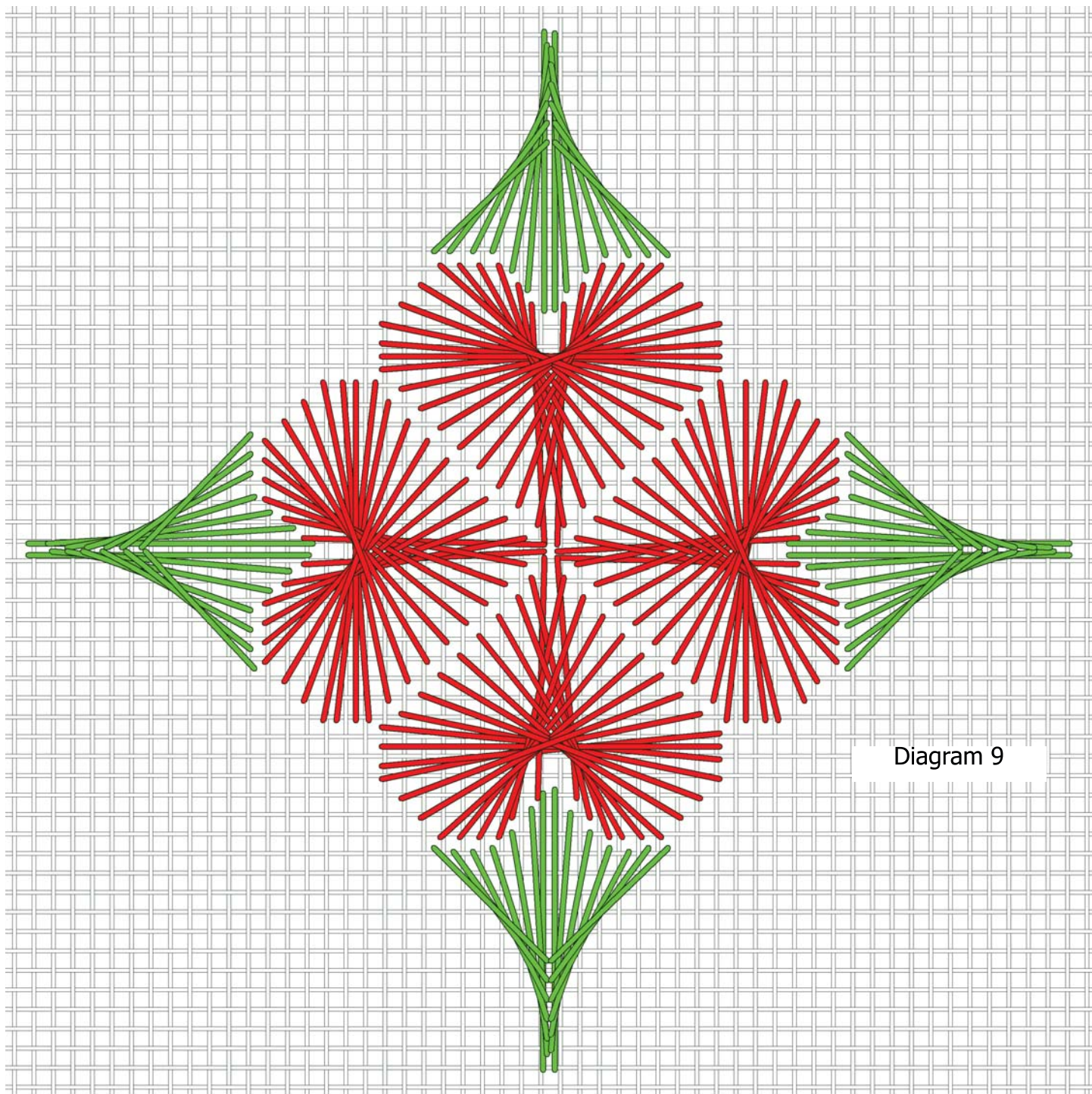
Don't end off the thread yet! This is a complete Amadeus, but we're going to add a second half, a mirror of what we have so far.



Stitch the second half as shown. The needle will come up along the top edge, and end in shared holes with the first half.



Stitch Amadeus around the braided hearts, shown in Diagram 9. You may find it easier to stitch, especially if this is a new stitch for you, by turning the canvas so you are always stitching the same orientation.



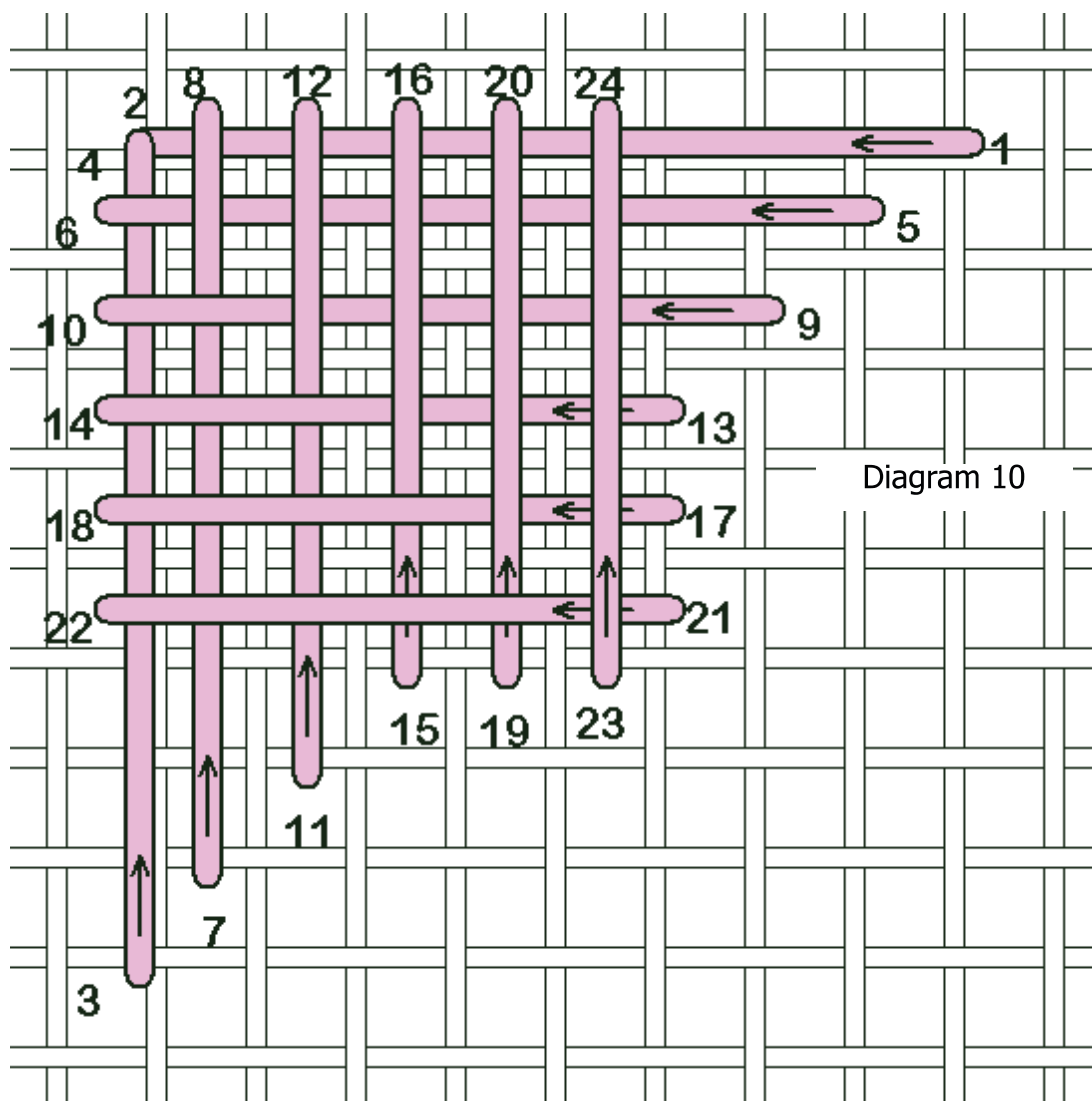
Right Angle Sprat's

Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
18"-22"	Stranded floss	Gloriana 12 Strand Silk Floss 196 Sweet Lavender (2)	

This is one of my workhorse stitches, and I use it in some variation pretty frequently! I thought I'd want to use 3 strands of floss, but 2 looked better so I took out what I had done and used the 2 strands.

Anchor with an away knot, or a pin stitch (T) placed where it will be under the sprat's head. End off the same way. I did not carry the thread from one sprat's to the next although you could do that if you prefer.

Stitch the sprat's head as shown in Diagram 10. The first two stitches share a hole at the ends of the stitches, and the remaining stitches are made over these first two stitches. This is not the usual way to stitch a sprat's head, but I prefer to stitch in this order and direction of the stitches because it makes for a neater back in my opinion. Of course the back doesn't matter so long as it doesn't affect the front! But in this case, the usual stitching order and direction of a sprat's head leaves a buildup of thread along the diagonal edge, and stitching in this order does not. Placement is shown on the next page.



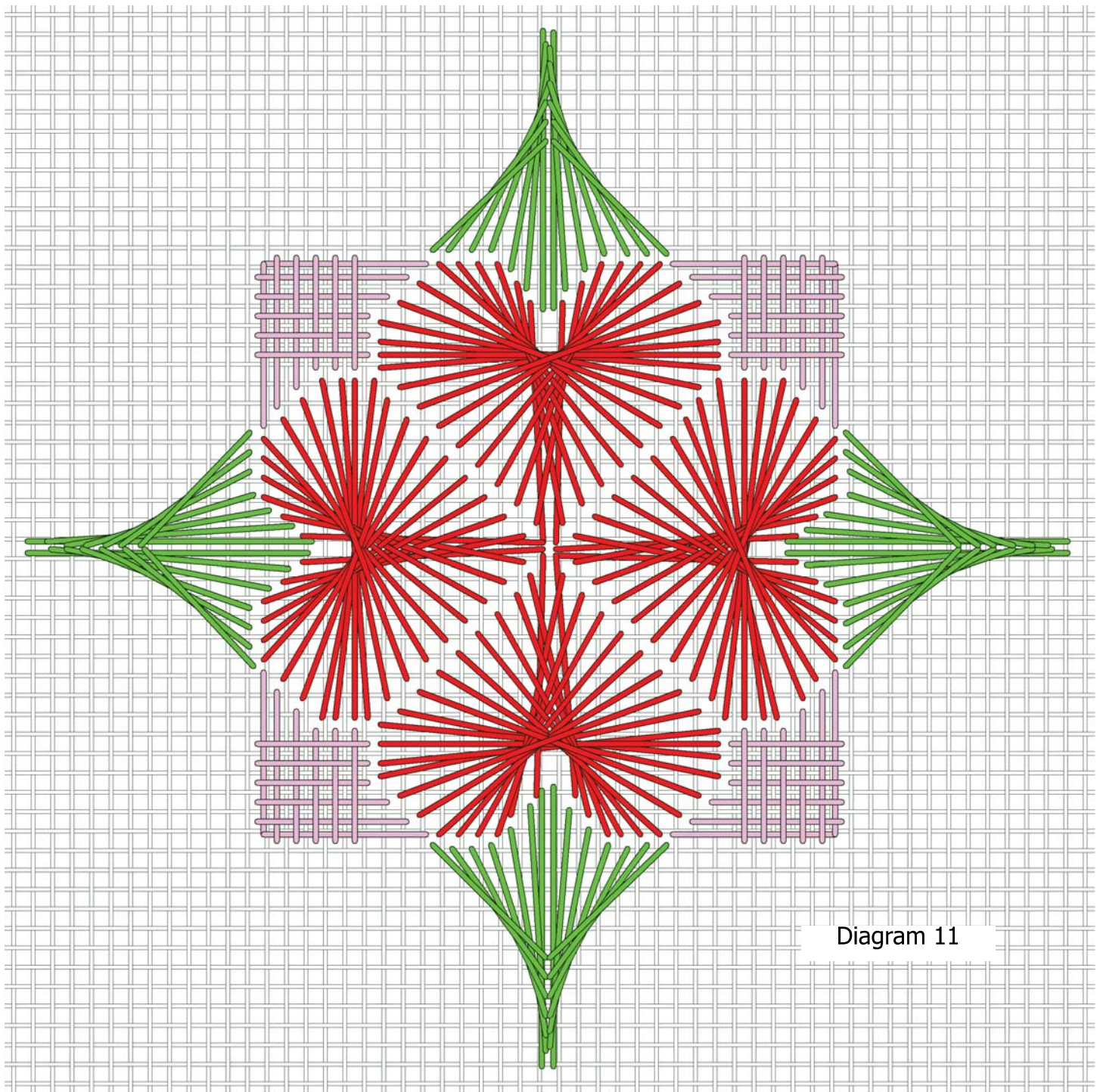


Diagram 11

You can see that the end points of the sprat's head don't take the usual diagonal line, but were designed to fit with the previous stitches.

You will notice that the first two stitches will look curved on the canvas - this is normal so don't be concerned about it. The first two stitches get pulled a bit by the subsequent stitches ending over them.

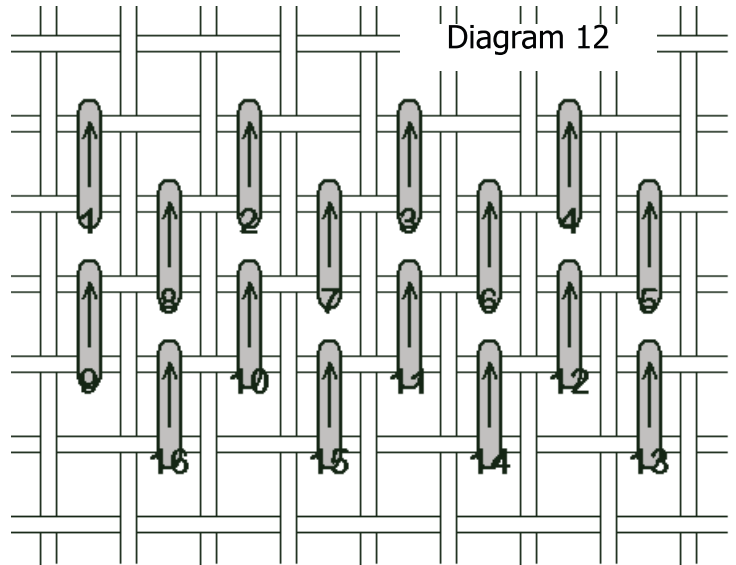
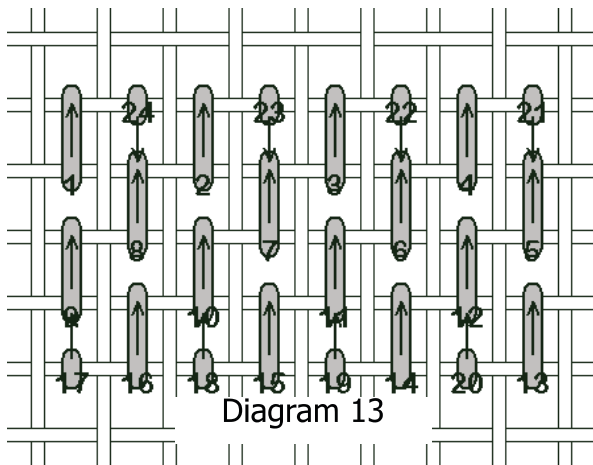
Brick Stitch

Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
24"-36"	Stranded floss	Gloriana 082 Mango Sorbet (4)	

For this next part of the stitch along we're looking at background stitches. A brick stitch is a vertical or horizontal offset stitch, easy to compensate, and used quite a bit in backgrounds. For this project I'm using the brick stitch to smooth out the diamond shape.

First let's look at a basic brick stitch. This is over 2 threads, offset by 1. If you look closely at the numbers you'll see that I stitch it so that the stitches are in rows, with a skipped space between the stitches. The next row will fit in the skipped spaces.

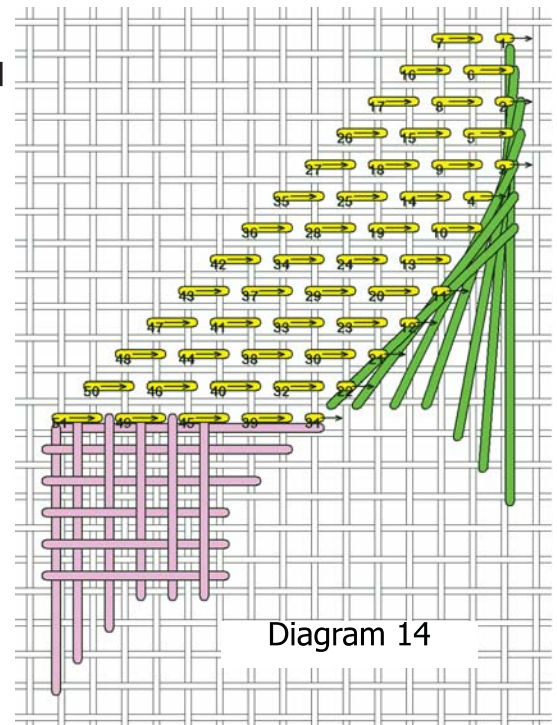
The reason I do it this way is for the integrity of the stitches. There is equal tension on each end of every stitch, which helps them to lay nicely. I'm bringing the needle up in empty holes and down in shared holes, which has less chance of disturbing the previous stitches. It goes quite fast!



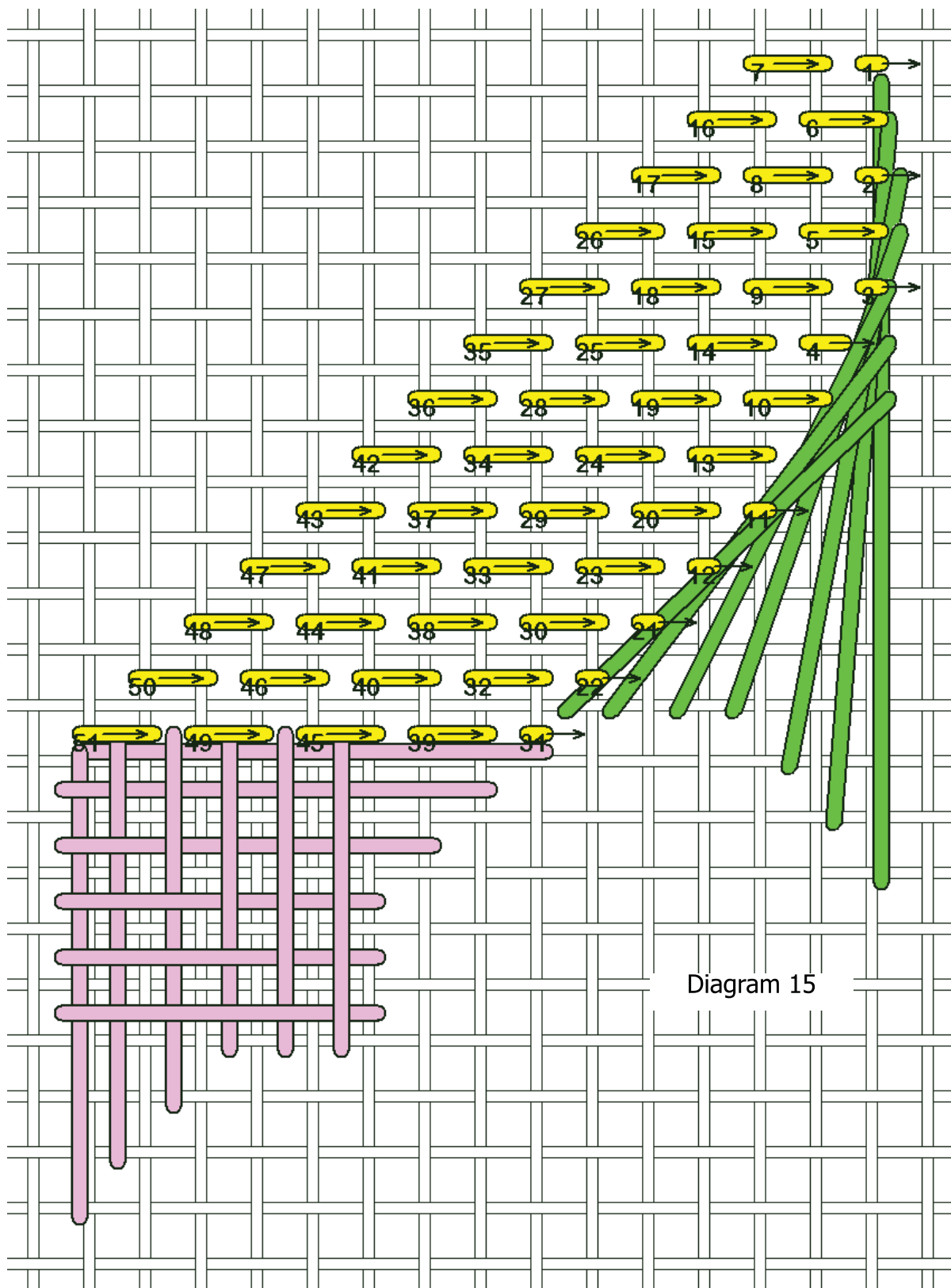
To compensate, using the same example, make shorter stitches, still skipping spaces to stitch the row across, and changing the direction of the stitch where necessary to bring the needle up in empty holes and down in shared holes.

Now we have a solid space of brick stitches!

Let's apply that to the project at hand. Since I wanted to make the existing area into a diamond shape, I stitched the brick stitch as shown in the next diagram. It was a little tricky to get the needle under the existing Amadeus stitches, but it still works! I used 4 strands of the silk floss, and a laying tool, for these stitches because I wanted good coverage.



This is the same diagram, but a little larger to make it easier to see:



Now, following the same stitch path of skipping spaces for the rows, stitch the brick stitch around the existing motif. I'm not showing numbers or arrows, because it is essentially the same as the previous diagram. If you find it helpful turn the canvas as you stitch.

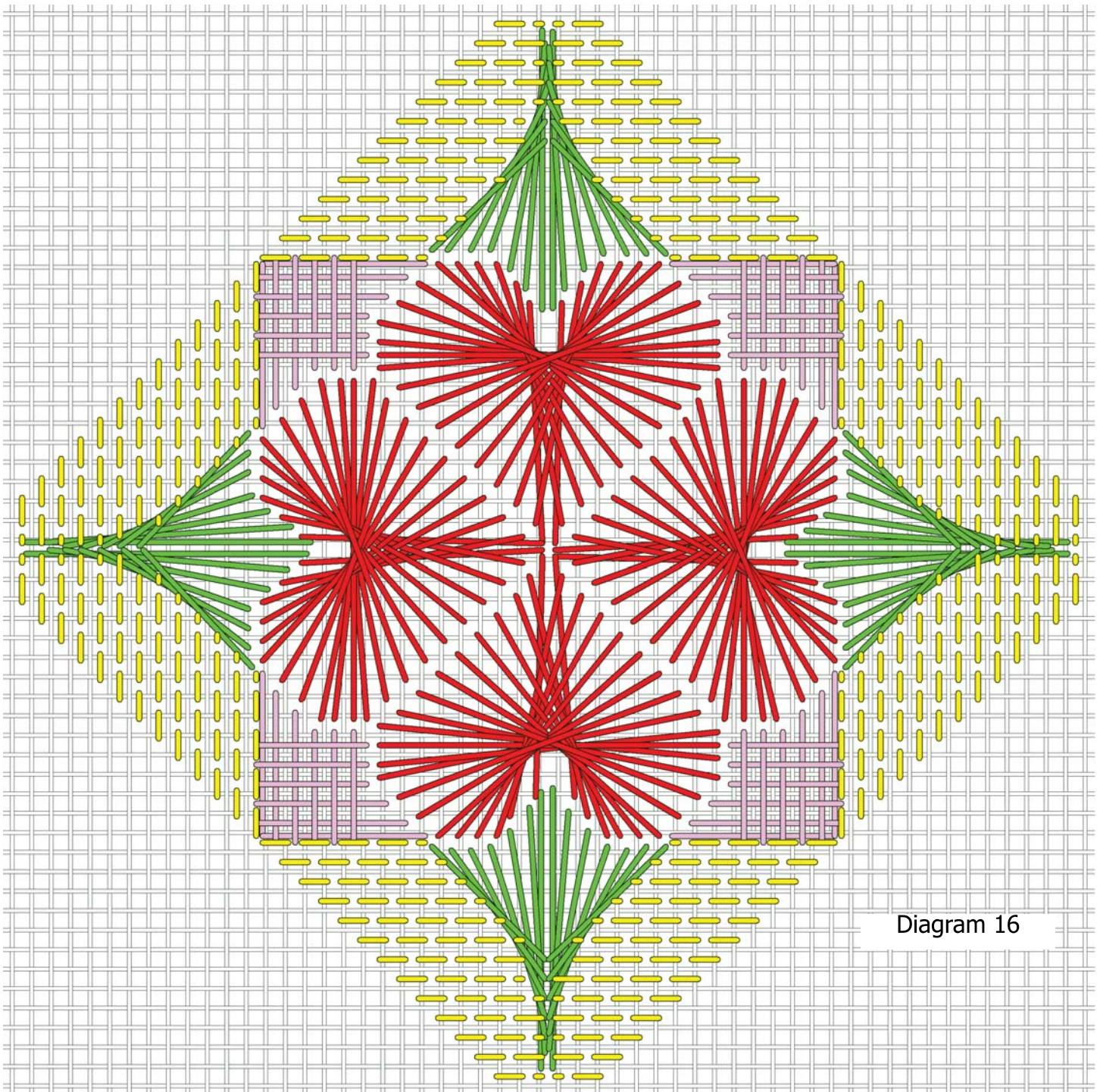


Diagram 16

The small compensating stitches at the edges of the Amadeus stitches tuck under the Amadeus stitches, not over as shown in the diagram. You can eliminate these stitches if you like, or add more if you think there are gaps in the coverage.

Milanese Stitch

Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
24"-36"	Stranded floss	Gloriana 015 Mint Green (3)	

This stitch will turn the design into a square. A Milanese stitch is in the satin stitch family - that is, all of the stitches begin from the same direction, and the thread is wrapped around the canvas. I used 3 strands for this part, but if you want a heavier coverage you can use more strands. Also, use a laying tool so the strands lay smoothly next to each other.

A basic Milanese stitch forms a triangle, shown in Diagram 17.

Stitch in diagonal rows, shown in Diagram 18. The rows are stitched down, then up. The triangles point down for one row, then up for the next row, shown in the diagram. An example of compensation is shown at the edges, and this is another easy to compensate stitch.

I suggest anchoring with an away knot, and begin at the outer corners, working toward the center design. Don't count all this! It's much easier to take the tip of your needle and "draw" it to the outer corner, then do the same thing for the next side.

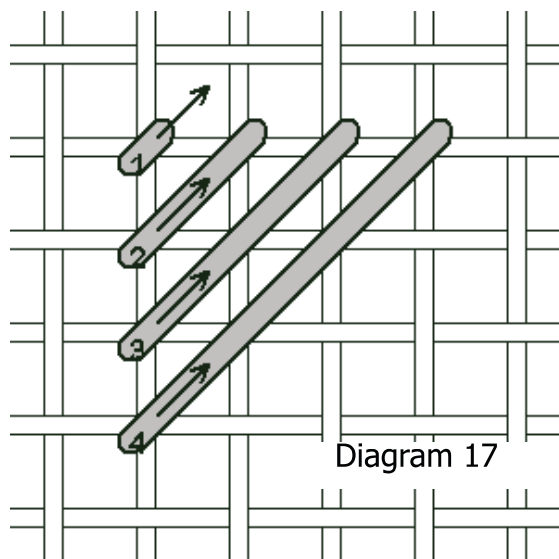


Diagram 17

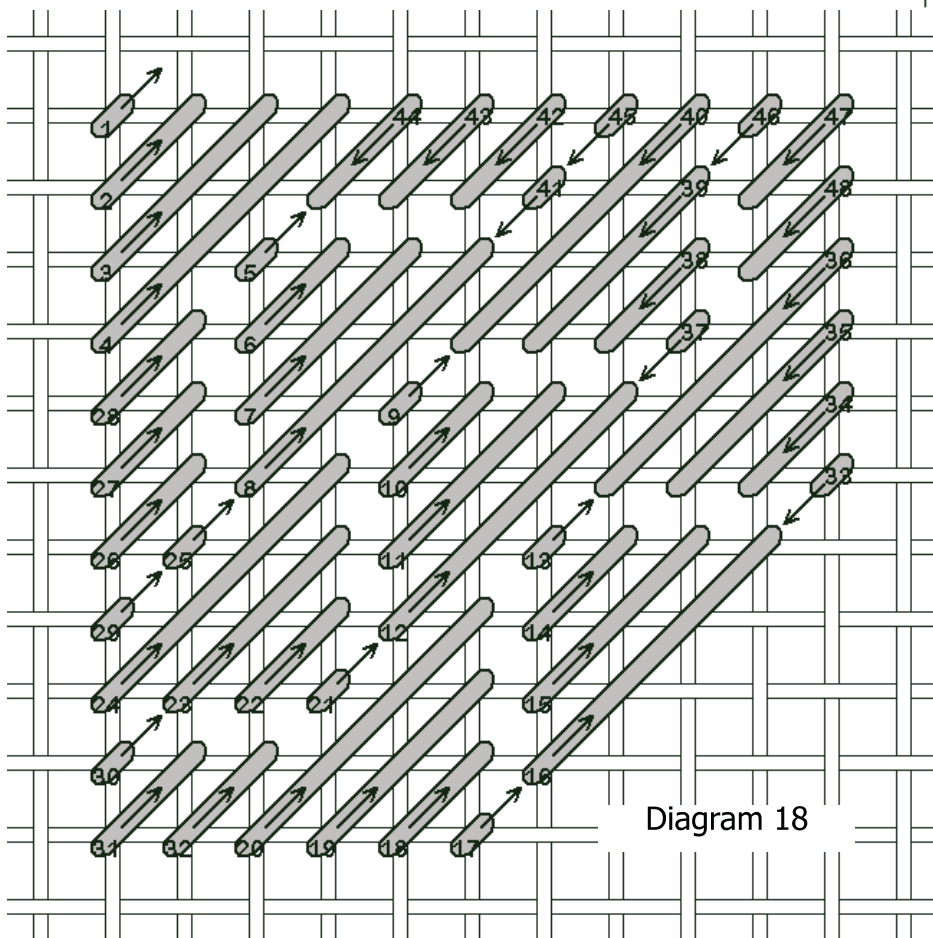


Diagram 18

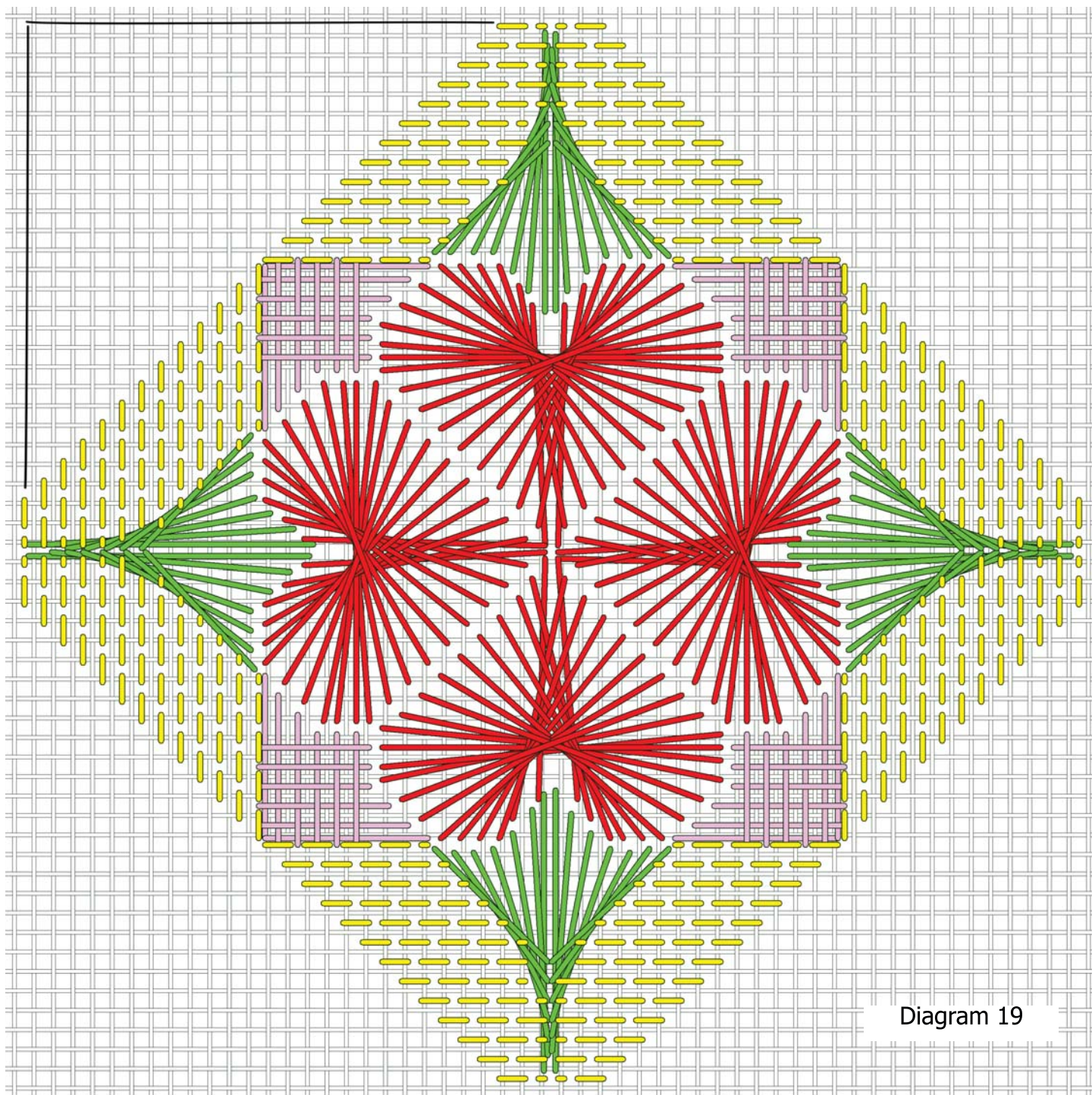
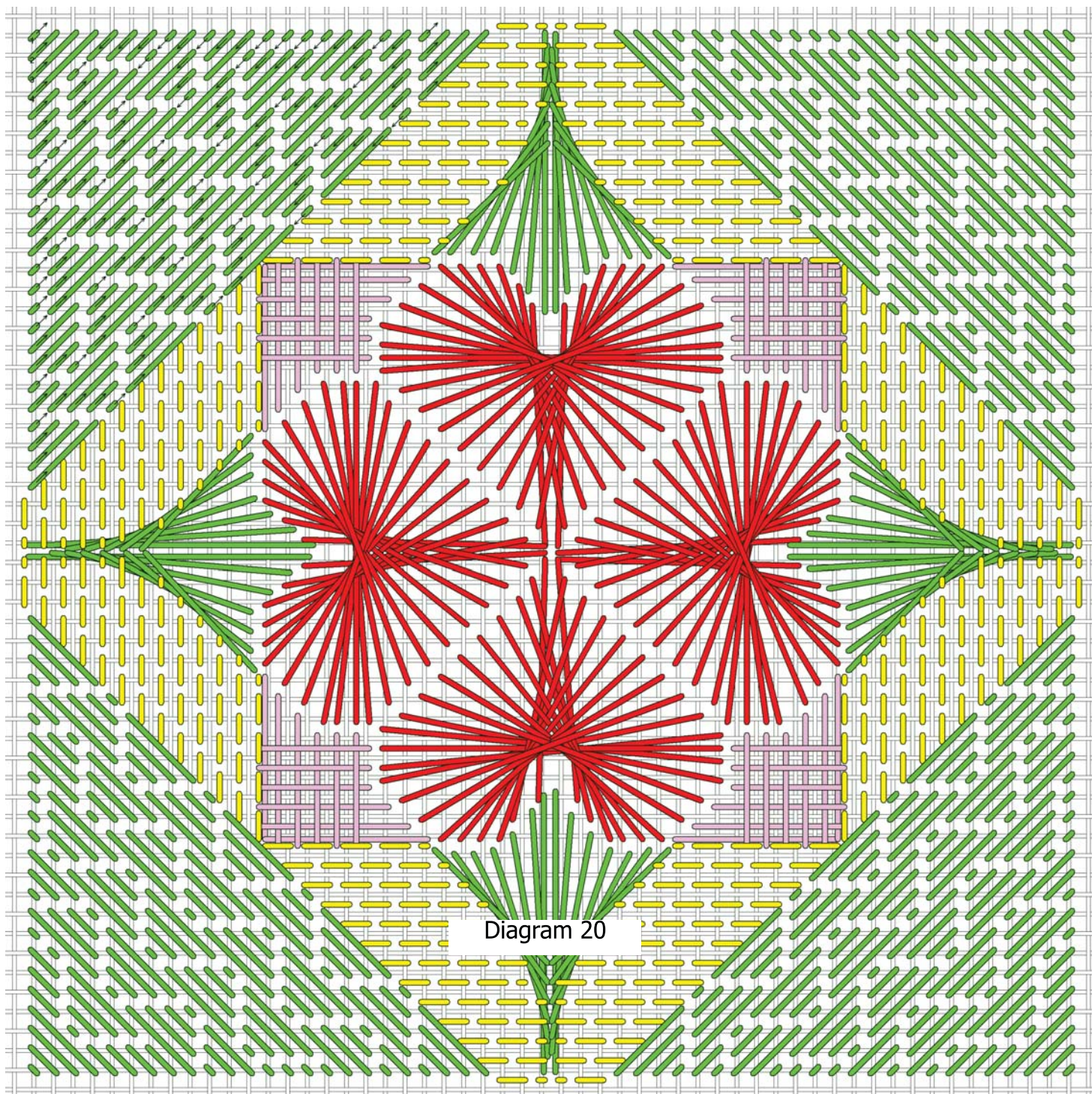


Diagram 19

The black lines show how to find the corner, by drawing the tip of your needle along the stitching channel at the top edge, then along the stitching channel on the left side. Where the lines meet is the corner. The first stitch of the Milanese will begin 1 canvas thread below the corner, and end 1 canvas thread to the right of the corner.



I started stitching in the upper left corner, but you may begin in a different corner if you like.

At this point you could end the project - I think it makes a very pretty motif! But if you'd like to continue with me, stay tuned!

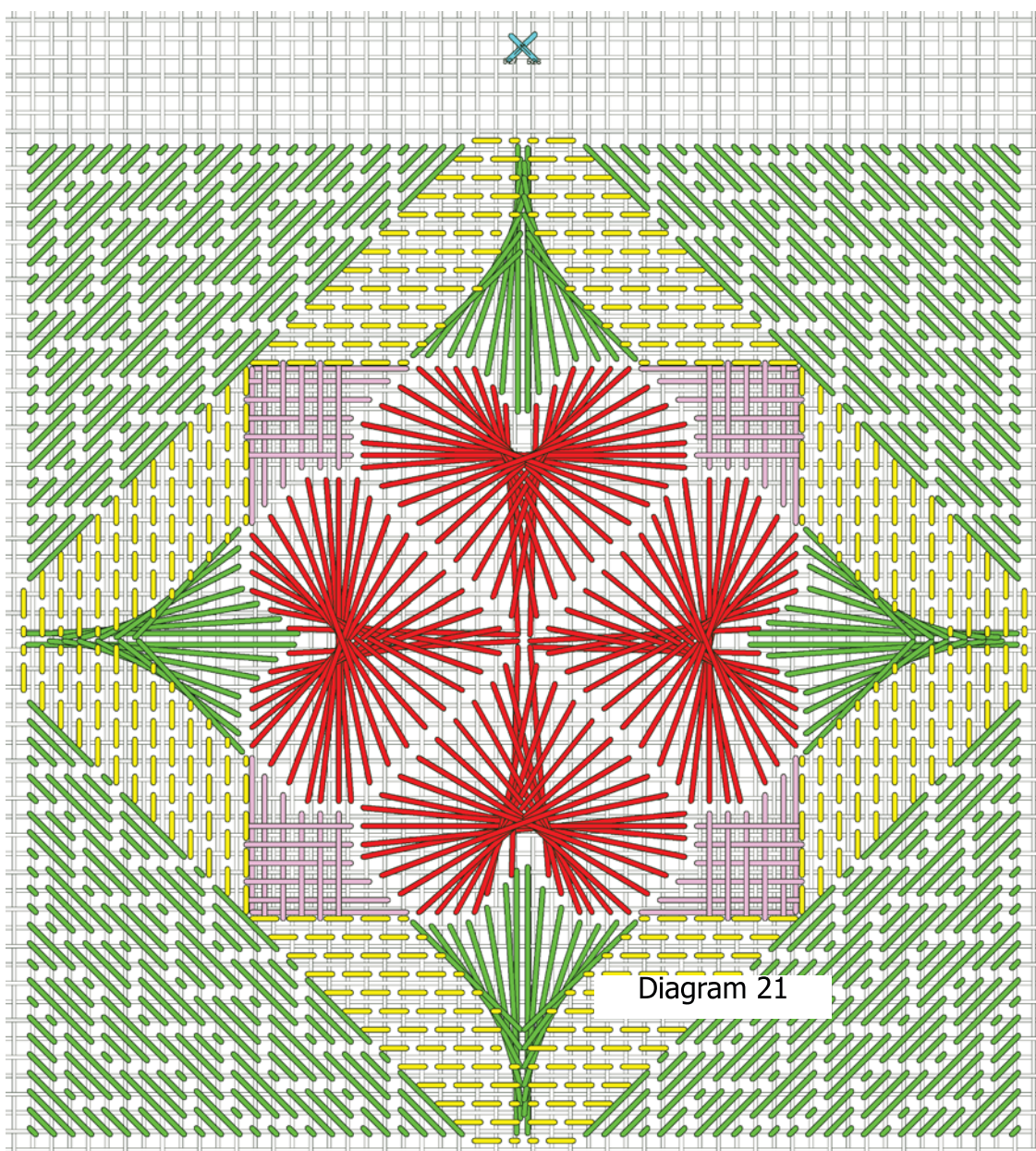
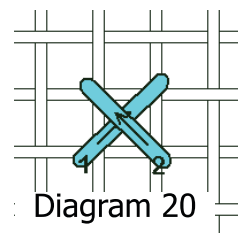
Herringbone Squares

Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
24"-36"	Stranded floss	Gloriana 084 Laura's Garden (2)	

I'm so excited to get to this part because I finally get to use my inspiration thread! Herringbone squares are a perfect choice for an overdyed or variegated thread, because most of the thread is on top of the canvas with fewer abrupt color changes - the colors seem to flow into one another.

This can be a tricky stitch because it's worked from the inside out, beginning with a cross stitch. Easy, right? The tricky part is finding where to start, so I'm helping you out!

Begin stitching with the cross stitch 4 canvas threads above the center motif. I anchored with an away knot, placed so I was stitching toward it, then clipped it off when I got to the knot.

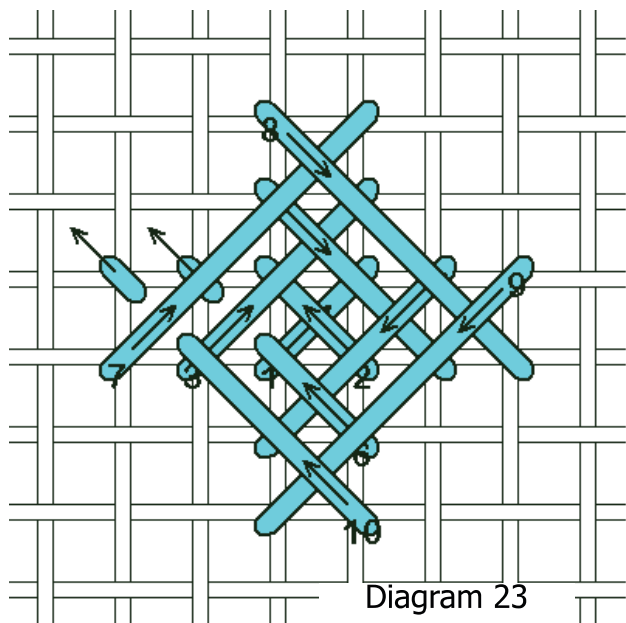


I won't show the rest of the motif for now, just how to get on with the herringbone square.

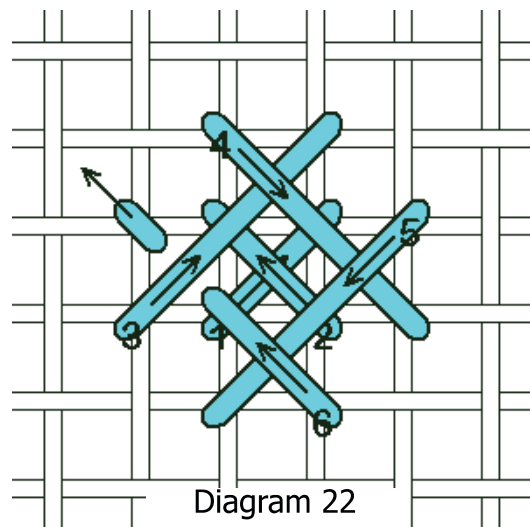
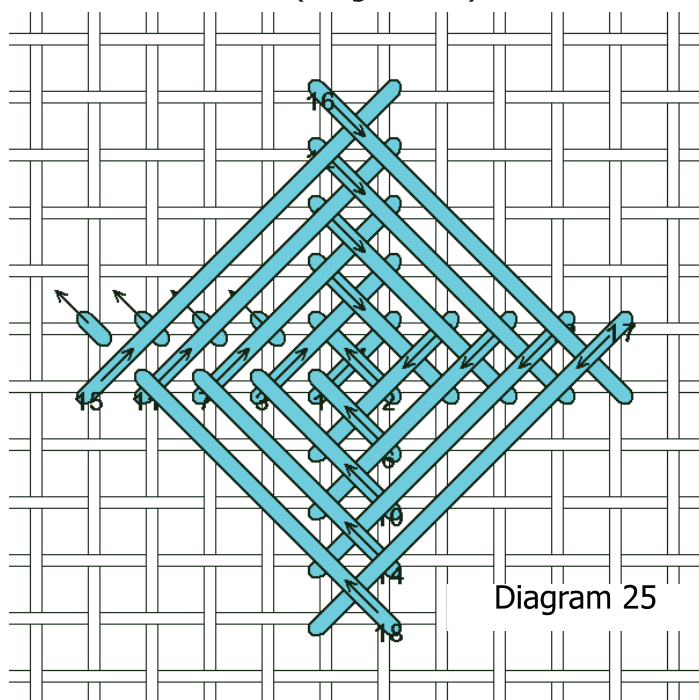
A herringbone square is stitched in "rounds", using the beginning cross stitch as the center. All of the end points will be in the same stitching channels as the first cross stitch.

Because this is a symmetrical stitch, to maintain the symmetry the last stitch of each round slides under the first stitch of that round before ending, to place a thread on top of every stitch.

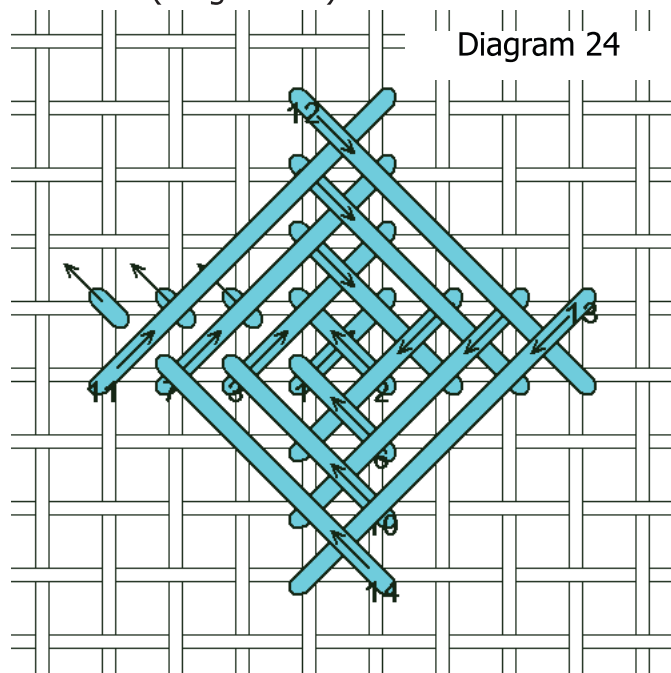
The next round is stitched in the same way (Diagram 23).

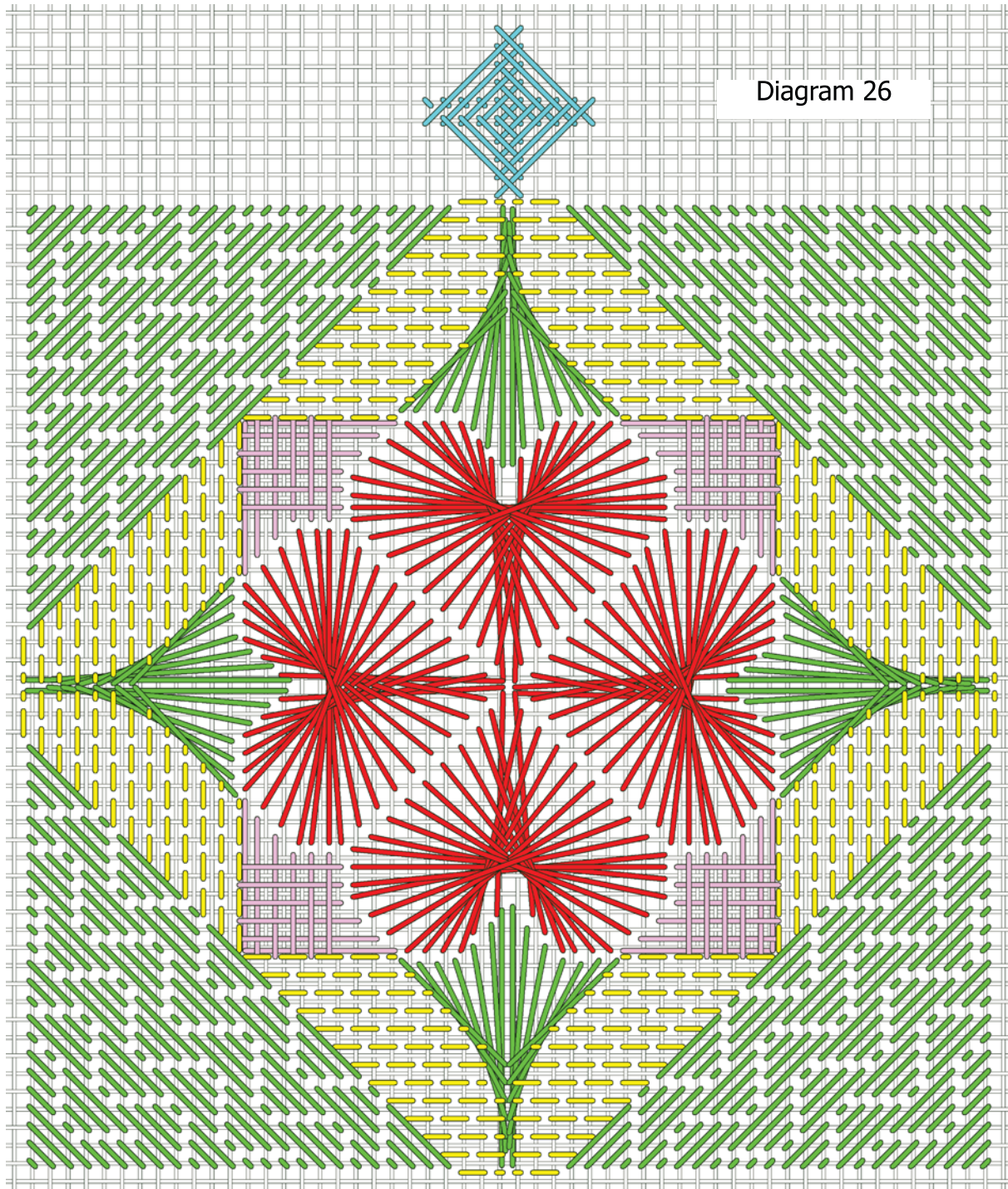


And the next round (Diagram 25).



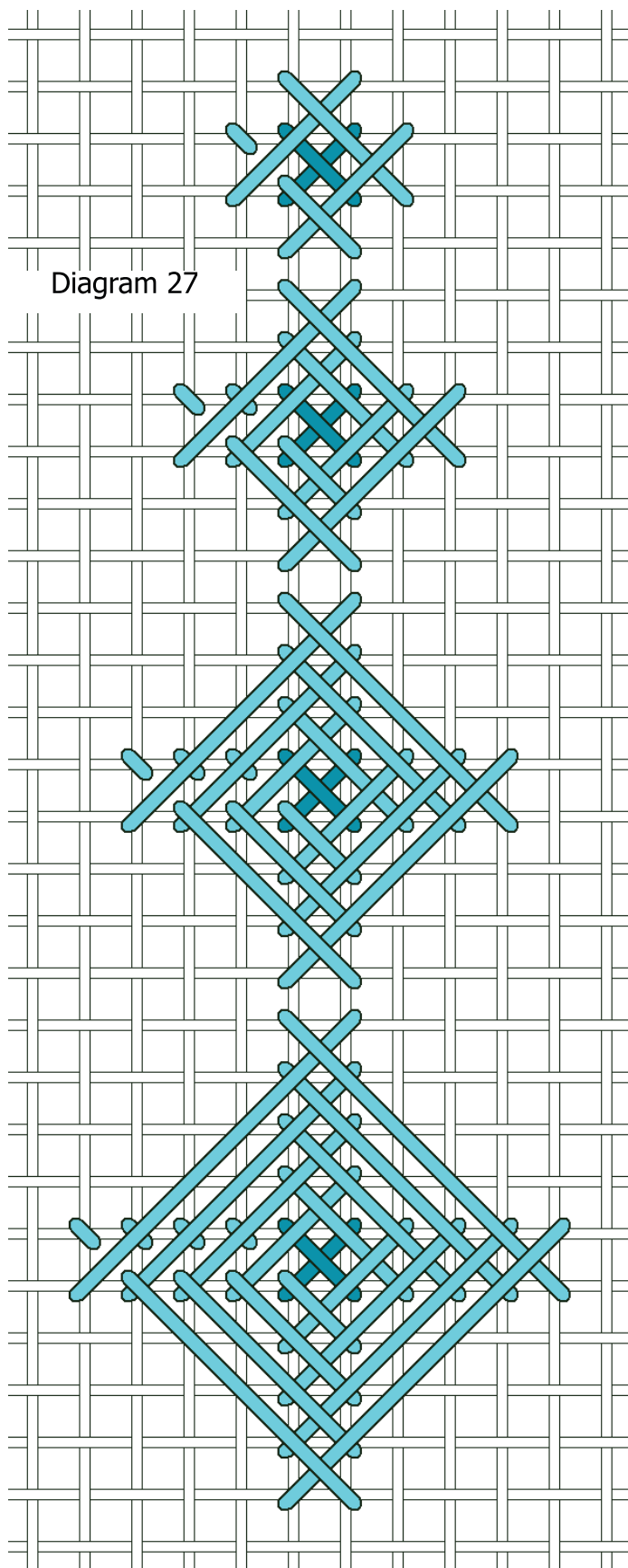
And the next round (Diagram 24).



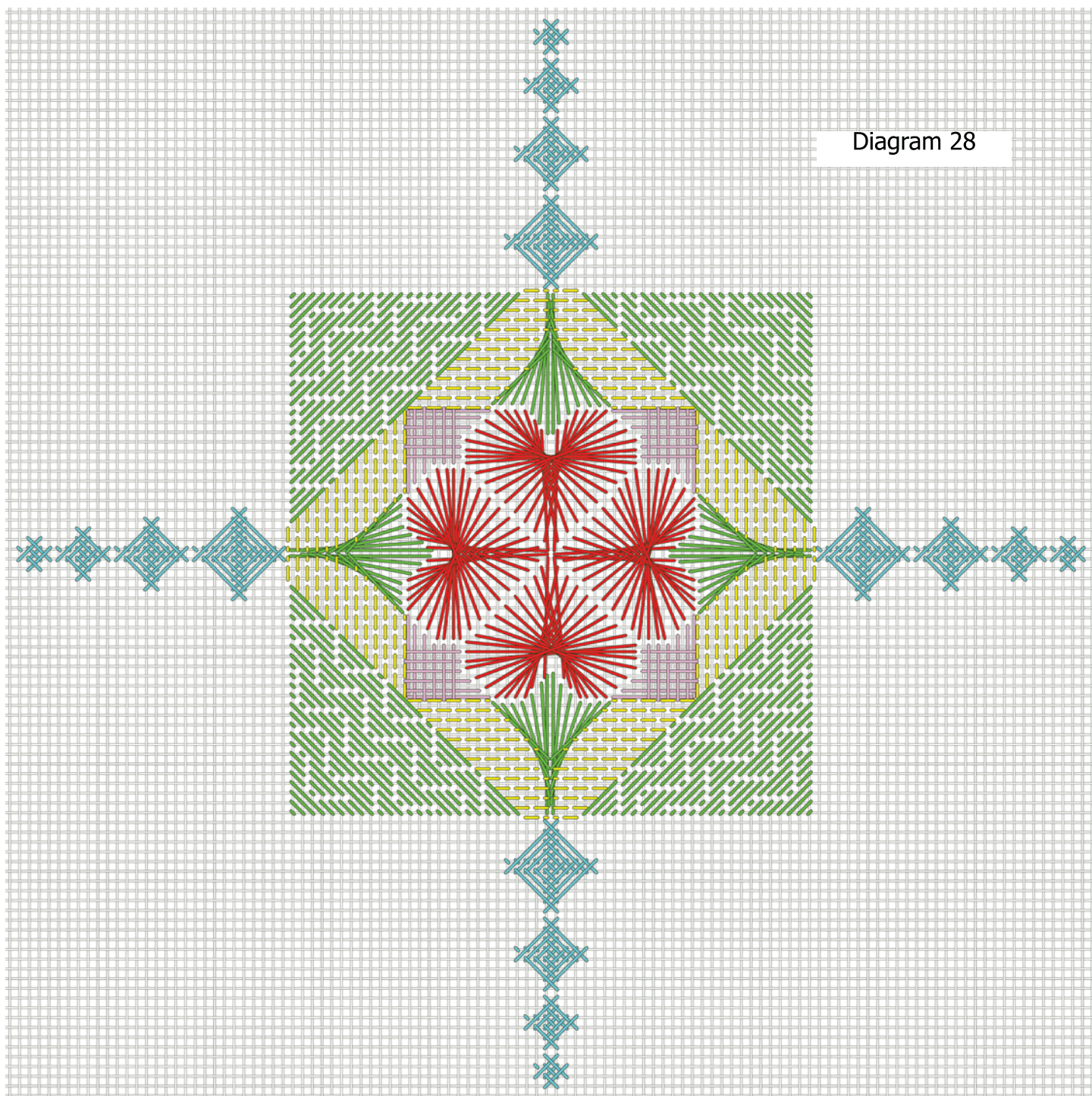


So this is what the herringbone square looks like in place: the bottom is sharing holes with the brick stitches of the center motif.

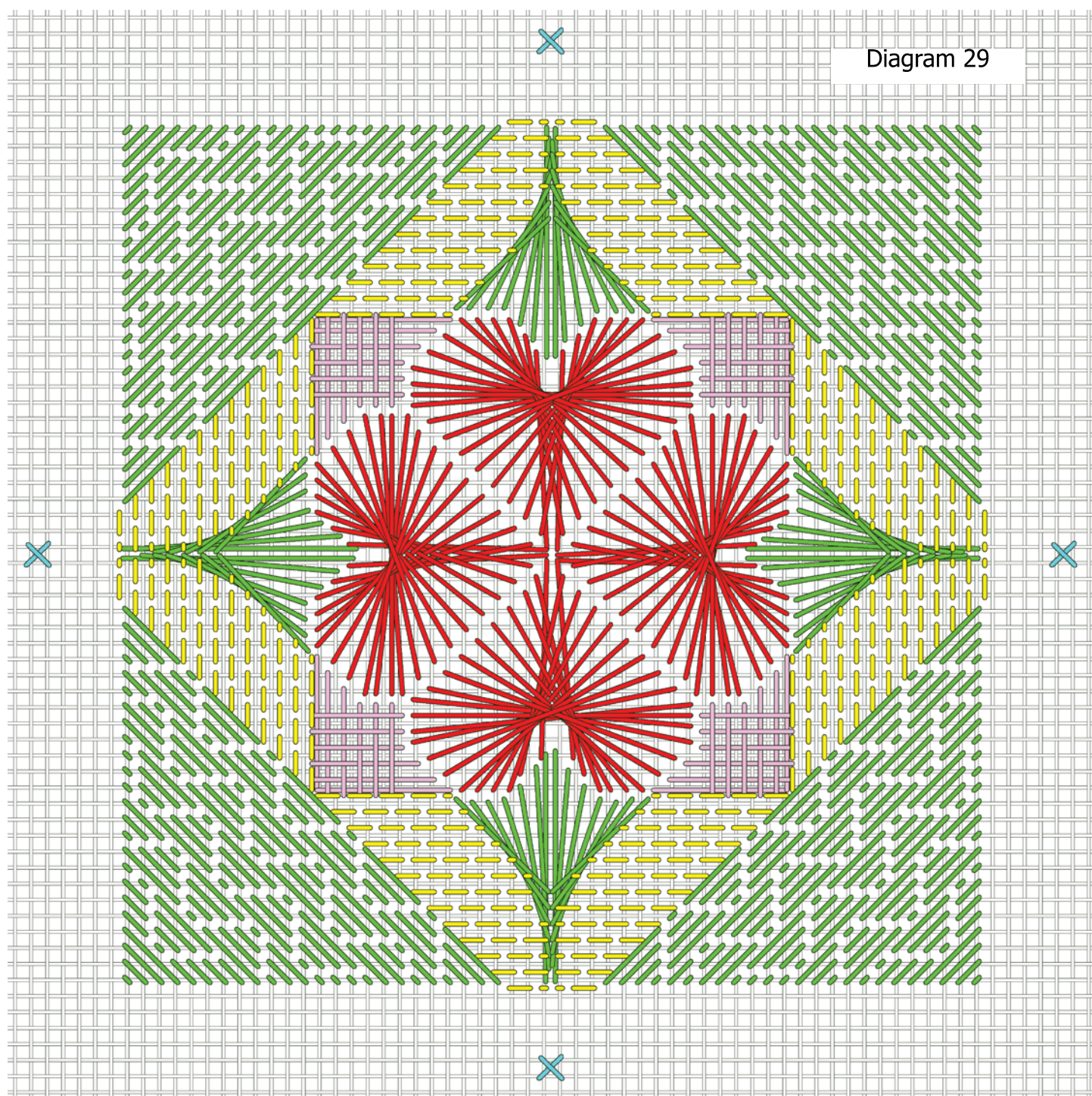
A herringbone square can be any size to fill the space allotted, so for this project I just made the herringbone square progressively smaller until I reached the outer edge (for now!). The beginning cross stitch is darker to help you with the counting.



If you want, you can turn the canvas as you stitch these - a herringbone square is symmetrical so it has no direction to worry about.



To help with the counting to get you started, here's the starting cross stitch for each side.



After stitching, weave the thread into the backs of the stitches. And, it's ok to carry the thread from one square to the next; the next stitches will cover any thread carries.

Ray Stitches

Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
24"-36"	Very fine poly metallic braid	ColorSpun Nebula CS-XH-05	

If you're thinking to yourself "What in the world is ColorSpun?", you're not alone! ColorSpun is a range of threads for needlepoint in various weights. This is a very fine metallic braid, similar to Rainbow Gallery's Petite Silk Lame' Braid or Petite Treasure Braid. As I find out more about the threads I'll share. In the meantime I wanted to play with it a bit, so here it is in the Stitch Along!

The next part of our project is ray stitches surround the herringbone squares. A ray stitch is similar to an eyelet, in that all of the stitches end in a single shared hole, but it isn't an eyelet so don't pull!

The ray stitches vary in size depending on the herringbone square it surrounds. The best way I could think of to diagram this is with the herringbone squares.

I began at the bottom, anchoring with a pin stitch, then stitched up the right side and down the left side, ending off with either a pin stitch or weaving under the herringbone square threads.

Diagram 30

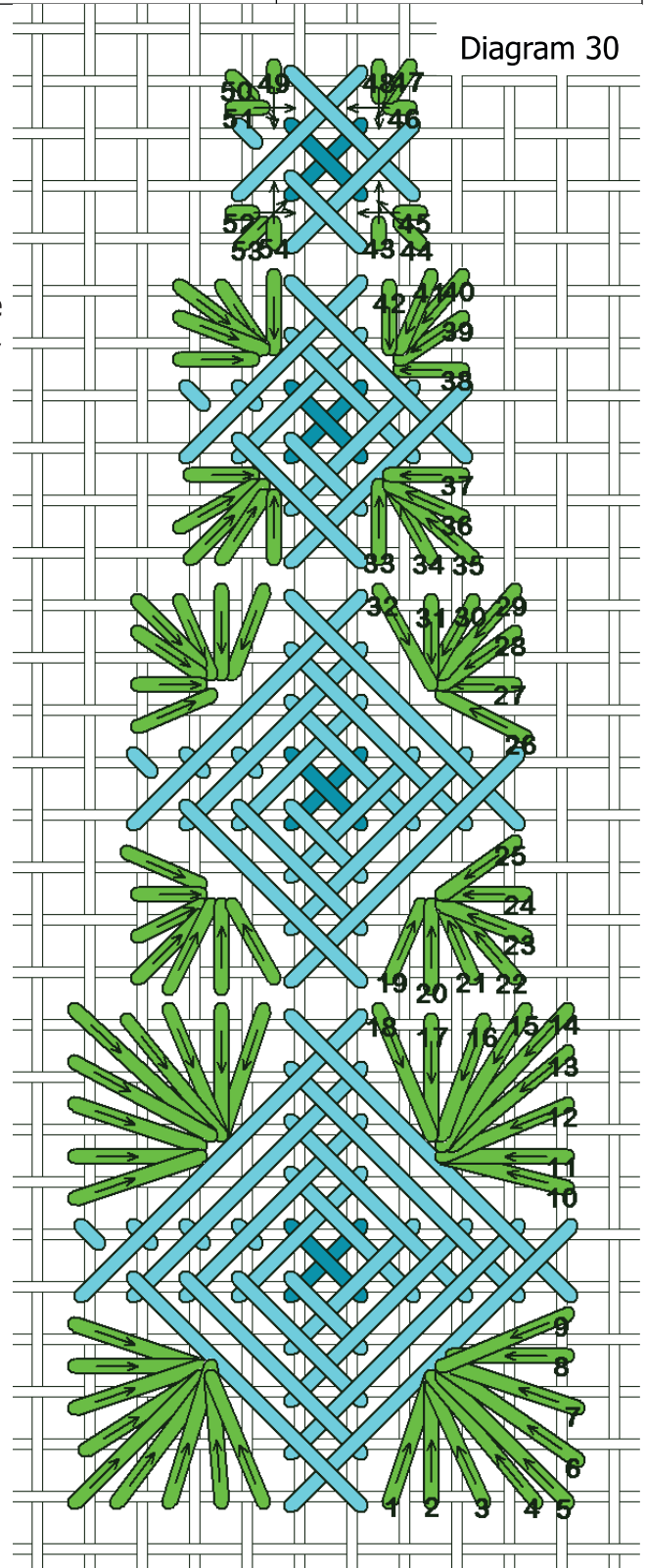
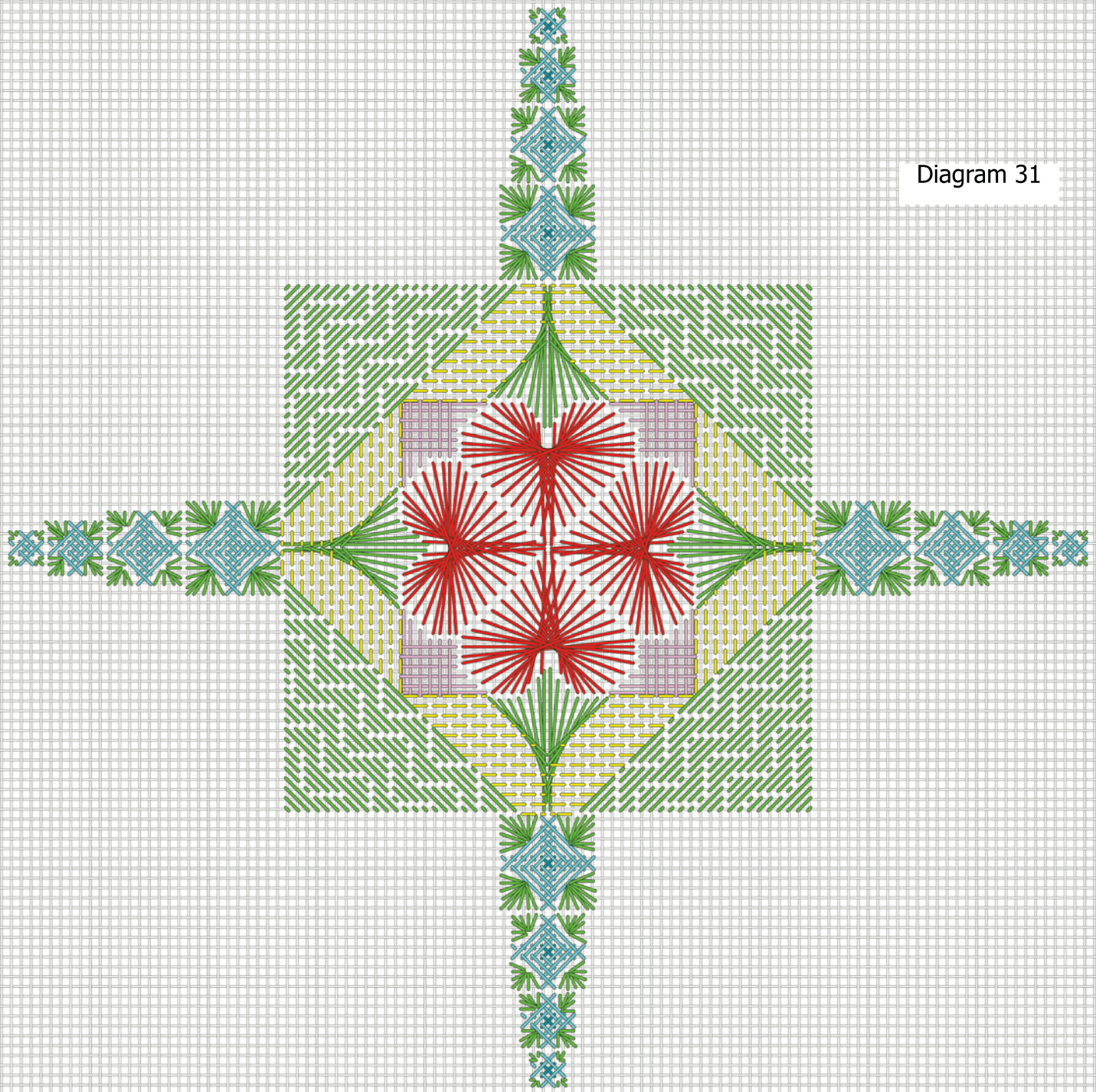


Diagram 31



Next we'll fill out the shape a bit more.

Waffle Stitches

Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
36"-40"	Stranded silk floss	Gloriana 029 Periwinkle (2)	

This is one of my favorite stitches, and I use it a lot! I tried stitching with 4 strands, then 3, but it was still too heavy so 2 strands it is!

Anchor with a pin stitch shaped like a "T", placed where it will be under the center of the waffle stitch. I found the length was just enough to stitch 2 waffle stitches, but the last stitch was kind of iffy; you may prefer to use a little shorter length and stitch just one before ending off and beginning a new length. End off by weaving into the backs of the herringbone squares/ray stitches.

A waffle stitch begins with a large cross stitch over 10 canvas threads. I'm only showing numbers at the beginnings of the stitches for this diagram. When stitching a waffle stitch, the stitches lay parallel to each other on top of the canvas, and the stitches don't cross in the back; the thread carries on the back should make an open square. The side where the needle goes down is the side it comes back up on.

The last stitch of the round (18) slides under the first stitch of the last round (15) before ending. This puts a thread on top of each thread in the waffle stitch.

A waffle stitch is a symmetrical stitch, so if you like to turn your canvas as you stitch go for it!

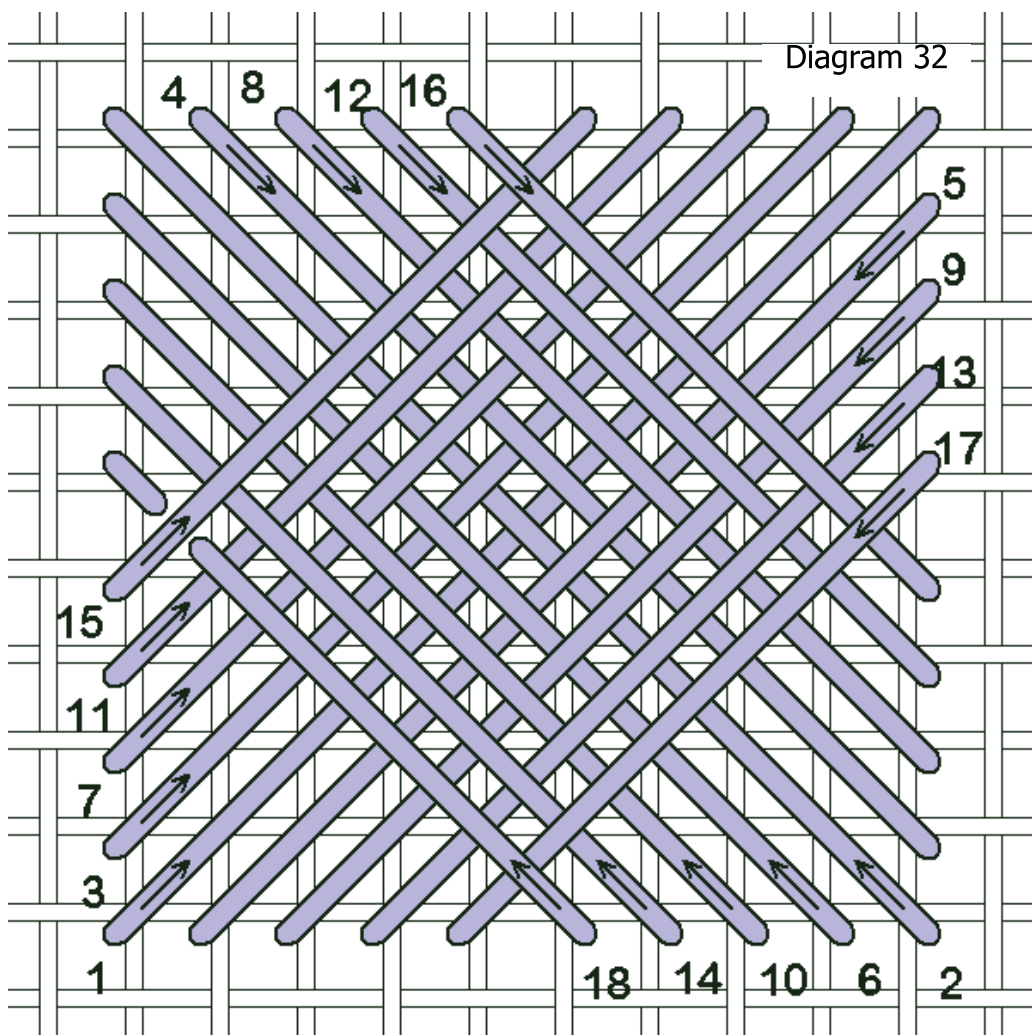
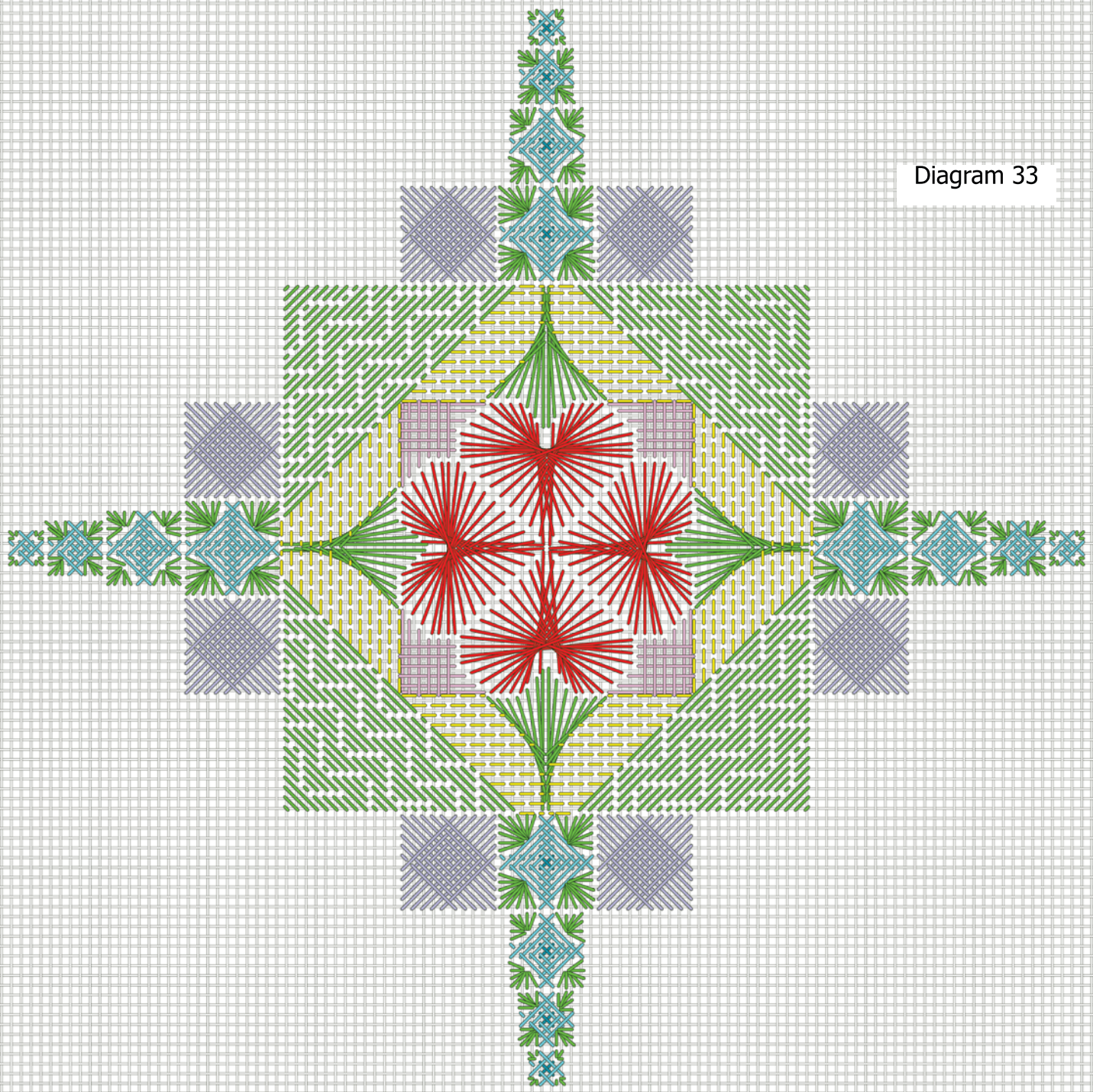


Diagram 33



Unnamed Stitch!

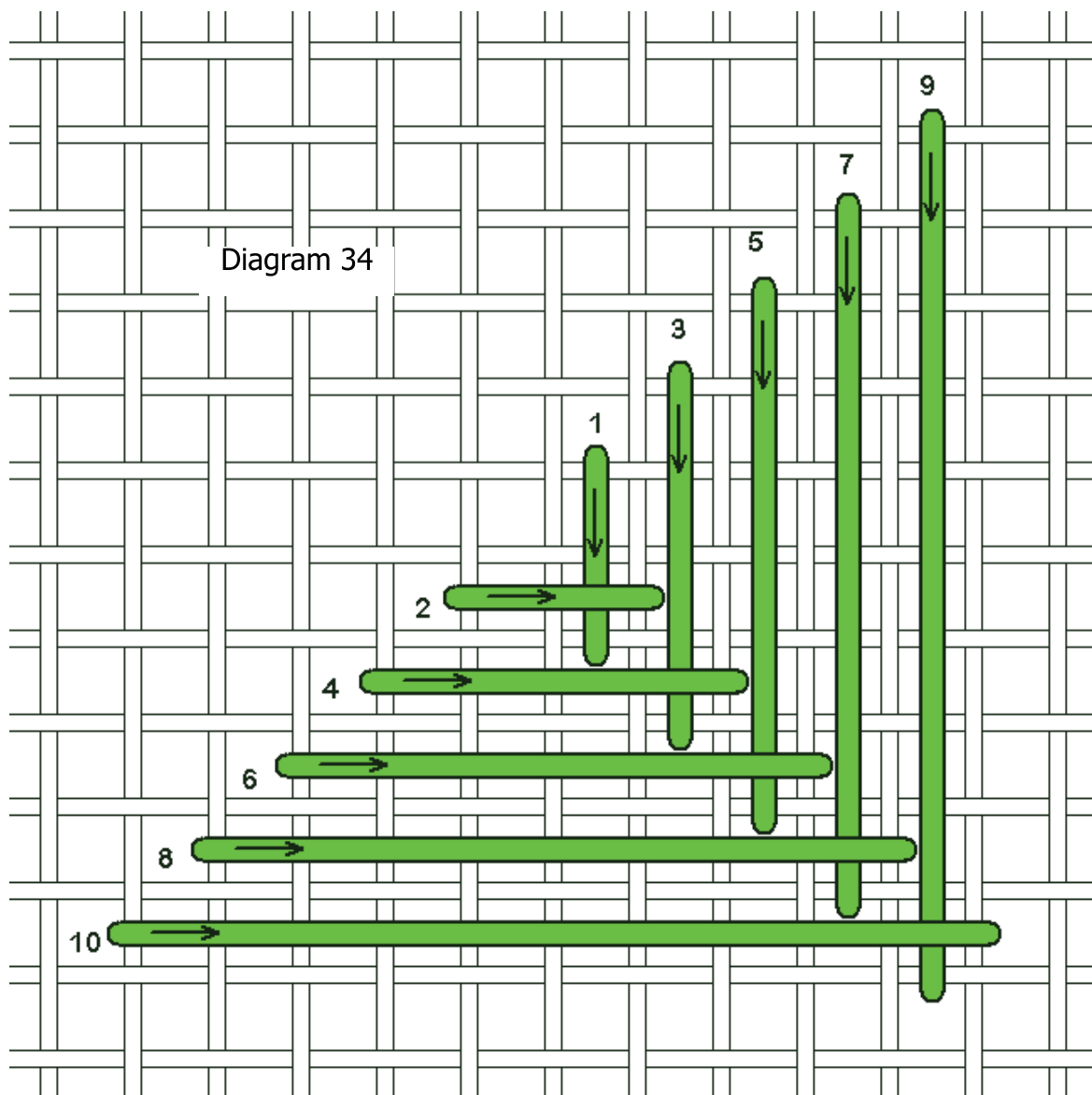
Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
36"-40"	Stranded silk floss	Gloriana 084 Laura's Garden (2)	

So, why is this the "unnamed stitch"? I looked through my reference books and couldn't find it. I don't think I've invented a stitch, I just couldn't find a name for it. So if you recognize it and know the name, please let me know!

For this stitch I used 2 strands of my color inspiration thread, Gloriana Laura's Garden. I started with the leftover pieces from the herringbone stitch, but had to thread up with more lengths, so these stitches are not the same colors throughout. But I generally like it that way so we're good!

For this stitch, alternate side to side as you stitch. I diagrammed it this way to avoid really long thread carries; you may find a different stitching path that suits you better.

I anchored with a "T" stitch, placed where it would be under the stitches, and ended off by weaving into the backs of the stitches.



Place the stitches beside the waffle stitches on all four sides, as shown in Diagram 35.

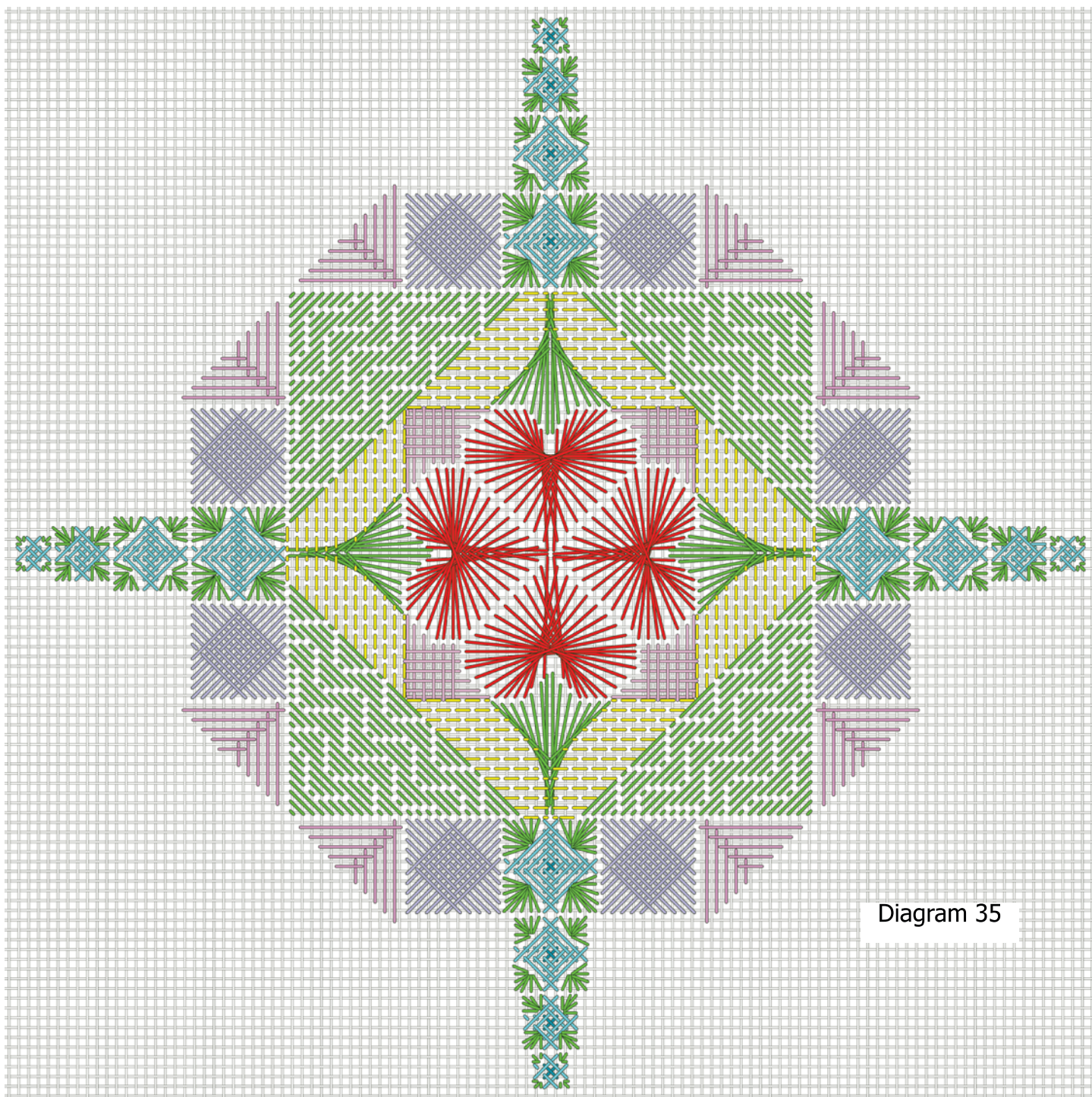


Diagram 35

I don't know about you, but I'm loving this little project!

Quilted Stitch

Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
24"-30"	Fine metallic braid	Kreinik #8 091 Star Yellow	

A quilted stitch can take many forms, but for this project I kept the crossing stitches shorter than the long vertical stitch, so hopefully the effect of quilting doesn't get lost.

I used a fine metallic braid for this stitch, because I love sparkle and so far there hasn't been much in this project! Of course, use any thread you like for this.

A basic quilted stitch is shown in Diagram 36. I stitched mine in the order shown in the diagram, but you may find a different path that feels more comfortable for you.

There is some compensation at the edges, shown on the larger graph on the next page.

To compensate at the lower edge, where it shares holes with the waffles stitches, stitch as shown in Diagram 37.

To compensate at the vertical edge, where it shares with the herringbone squares and ray stitches, stitch as shown in Diagram 38.

Because this stitch has a strong vertical orientation, I rotated the stitches on the sides, so the stitches would look the same. You may find it easier to stitch this as well, since you can turn your canvas to stitch.

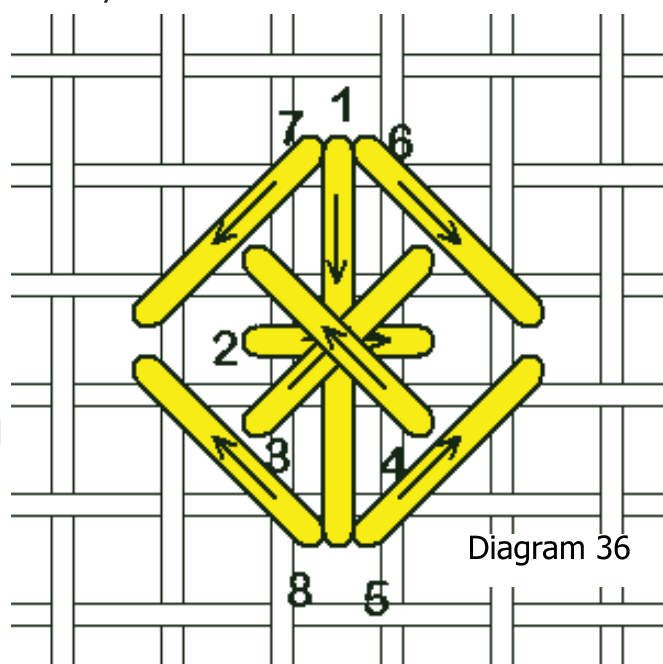


Diagram 36

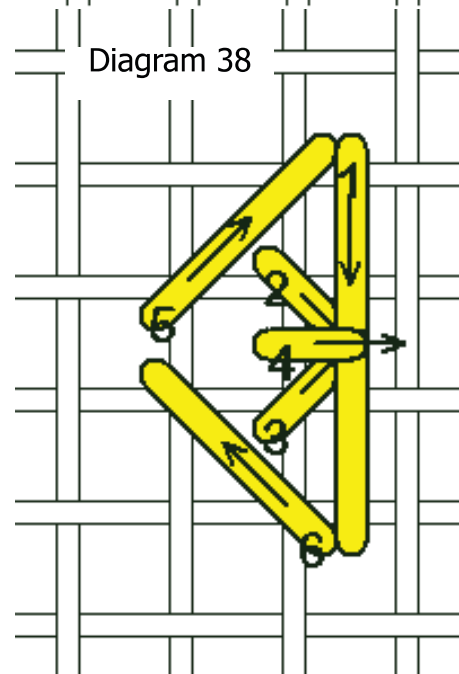


Diagram 38

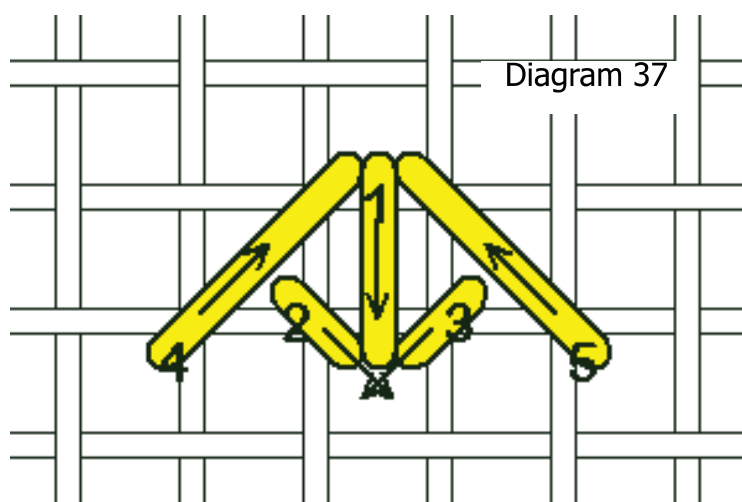
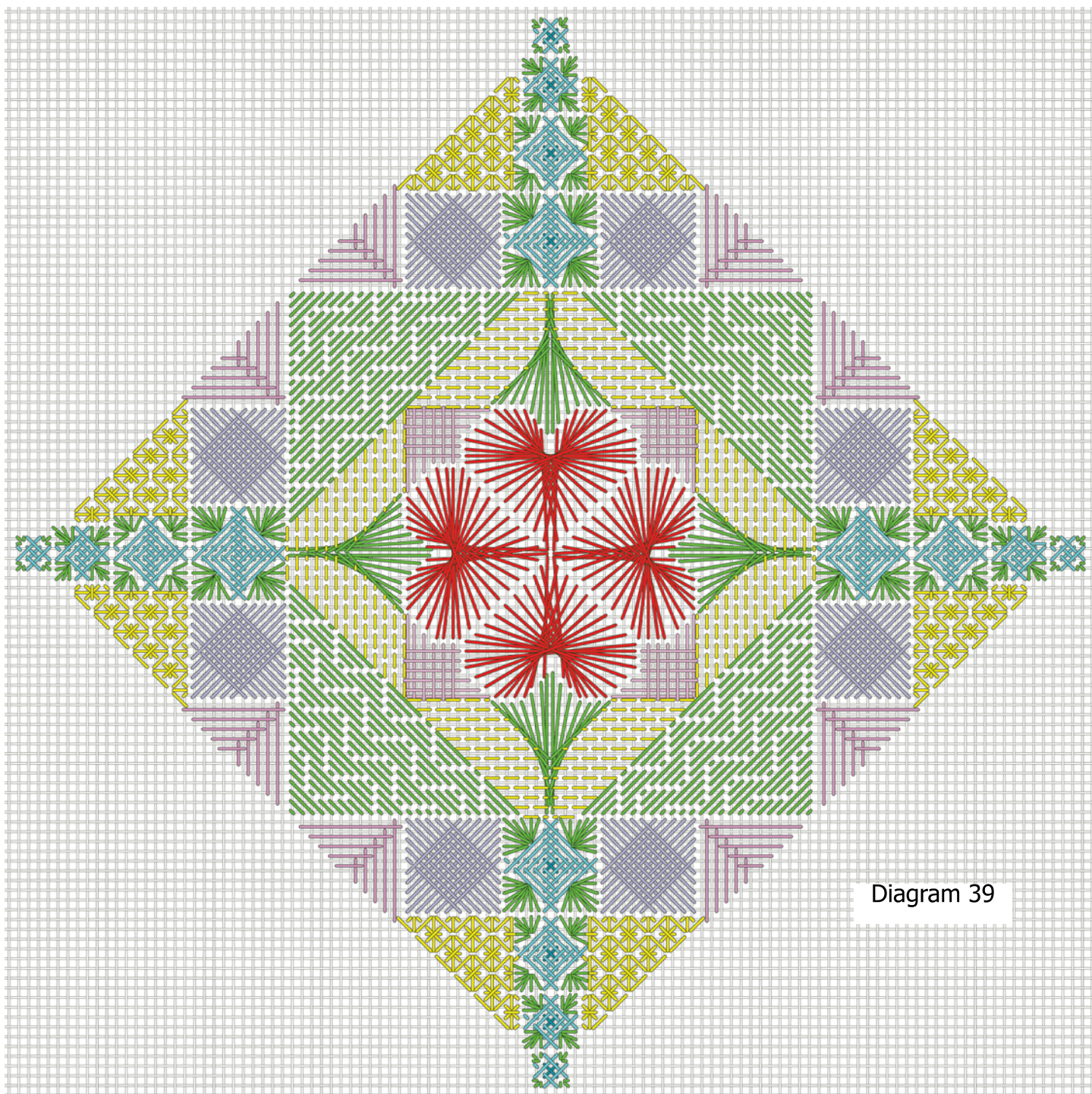


Diagram 37



We have one more stitch surrounding the center, then we'll take on the corners!

Diagonal Fern

Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
24"-30"	Silk floss	Gloriana 12 Strand Silk Floss 196 Sweet Lavender (2)	

This stitch will frame the center motif, and we'll be leaving the center to work on the corners. I used 2 strands of floss for this stitch.

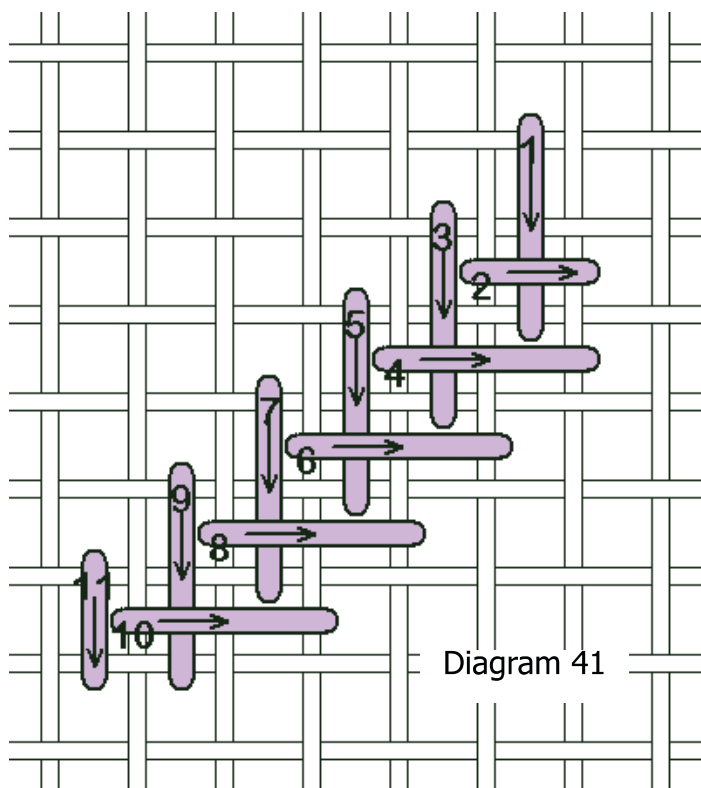
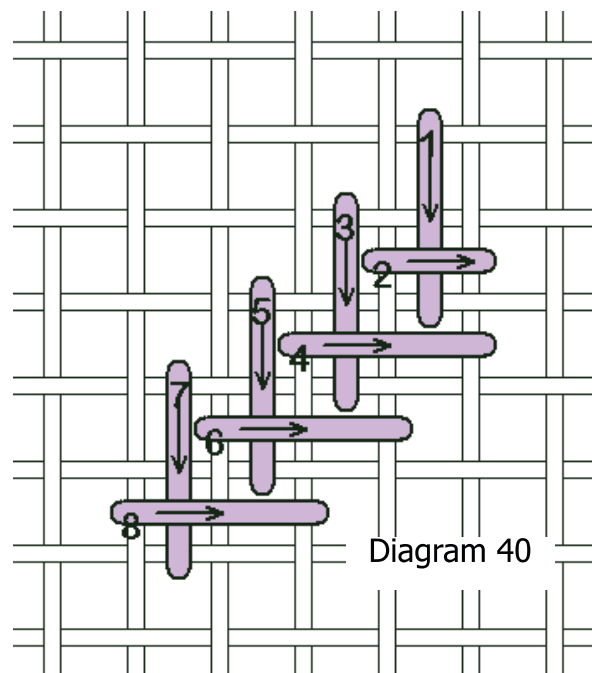
Anchor with either an away knot or by weaving into the backs of the surrounding stitches. End off by weaving into the back of the stitch.

This one will be a little bit tricky at the start and end of the diagonal row, with the compensating stitches. The compensation is not the same at the beginning and ending of the rows! I know I was a little bit confused each time I had to start a new side, so hopefully you can avoid my confusion! You may find it helpful to turn the canvas as you stitch, so you are always stitching the same orientation.

I started at the top and worked down the upper left side first, then the lower left side, then the lower right and finished with the upper right. You may stitch in a different order if you prefer.

Begin as shown in Diagram 40. Stitch 1 is over 3 canvas threads, as are the rest of the vertical stitches. However, stitch 2 is only over 2 canvas threads, with the rest of the horizontal stitches over 3 canvas threads. Stitch 2 is the compensated stitch for the start of the row.

Stitch down until you are at the left point of the center motif. Compensate the bottom as shown; stitch 11 is only over 2 canvas threads instead of 3.



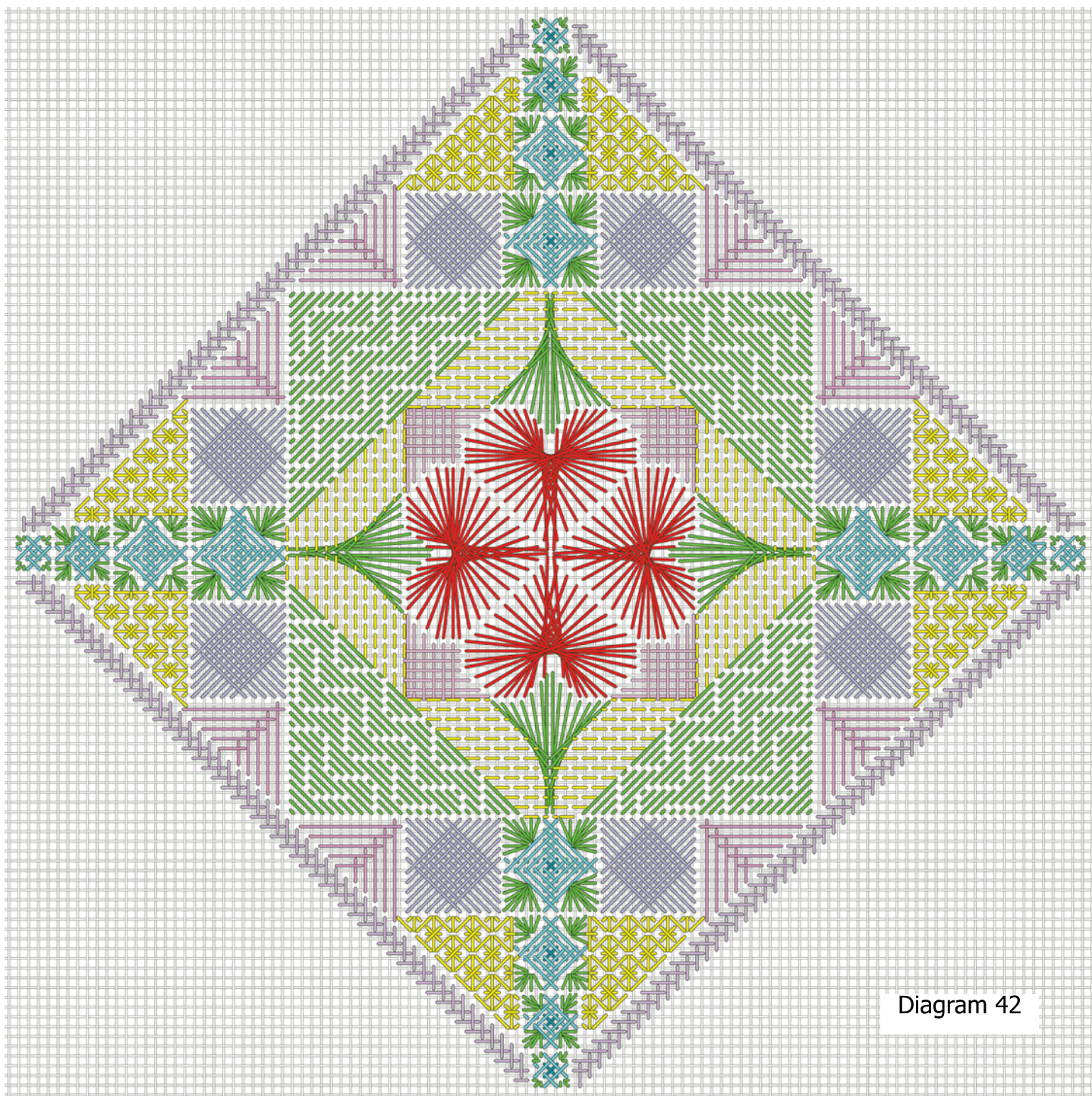


Diagram 42

If you want you can stop here. I'm going to keep going!

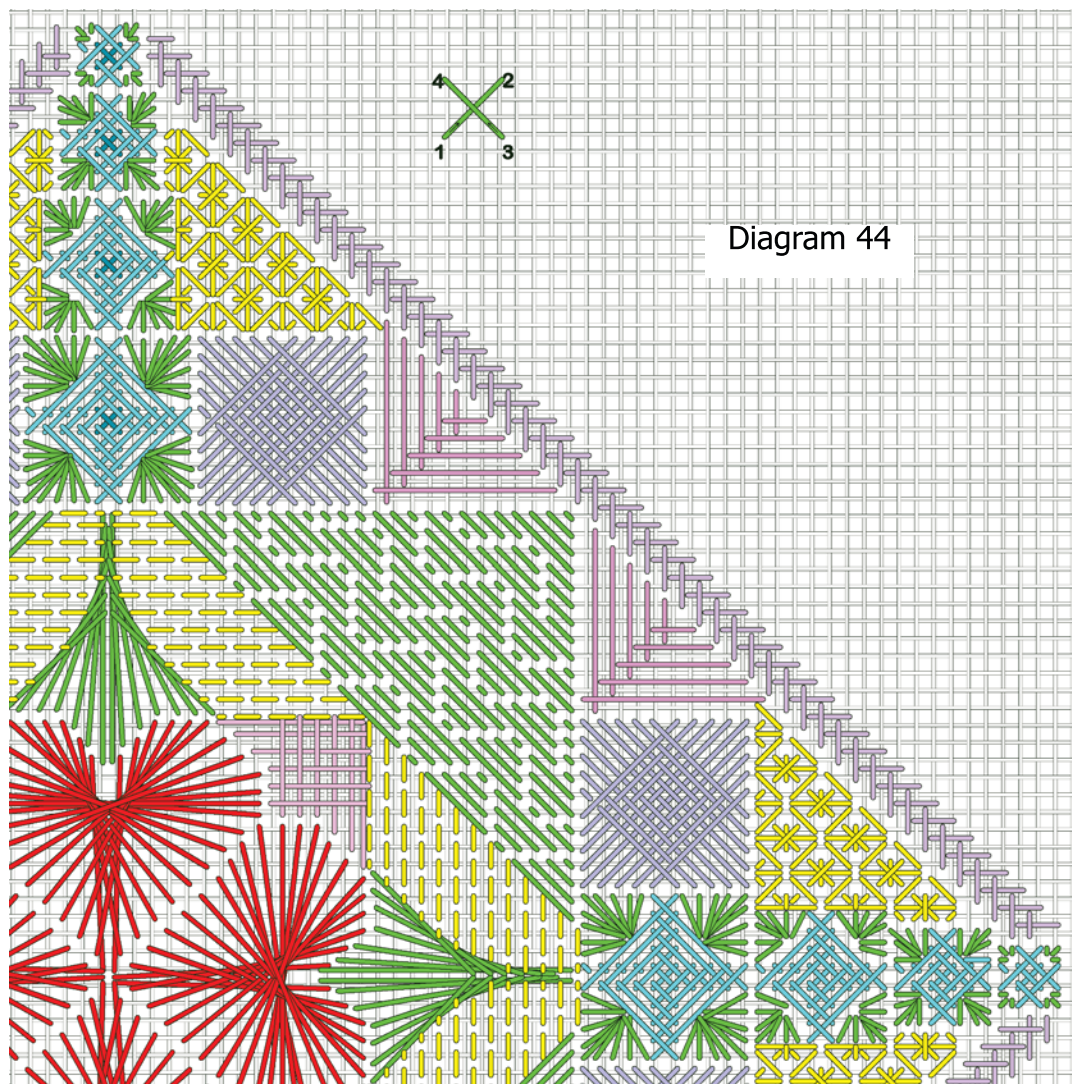
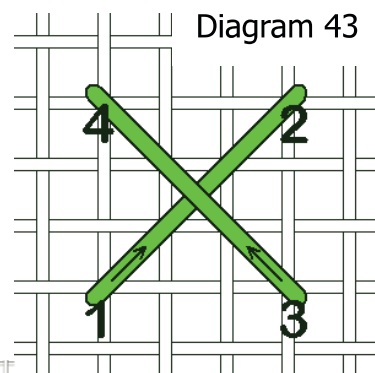
Twisting Stars

Length	Thread Type	As Shown	Your Choice
30"-36"	Fine metallic braid	Kreinik #8 9194 Star Green	

Now we're moving out to the corners, and here's a lovely stitch, twisting stars. If you've not encountered these before I hope you like them!

It will take about 30" to stitch one cluster of twisting stars. Anchor with a pin stitch, stitched like a back stitch, along one of the diagonal lines of the beginning cross stitch, where it will be covered by the cross stitch. End off by weaving into the backs of the stars.

This stitch begins with a cross stitch over 4 canvas threads. Now, you may be wondering where to put this first stitch. I stitched on the top right side of the center motif. Count over 17 canvas threads from the small ray stitch at the top of the herringbone squares, and 7 canvas threads down; bring the needle up here at position 1.



The twisting star is stitched in three steps. The first step is the cross stitch over 4. The second step is shown in Diagram 45, and the third step in Diagram 46. Even though it is called a "twisting star", there's no twisting or weaving under previous stitches, which makes it simpler but oh so effective!

I've removed the numbers for the second step to show the third step more clearly in Diagram 46. Basically, you're connecting the dots to make points for the star on all four sides. The stitches are coming over previous stitches, but not weaving under anything, just laying on top.

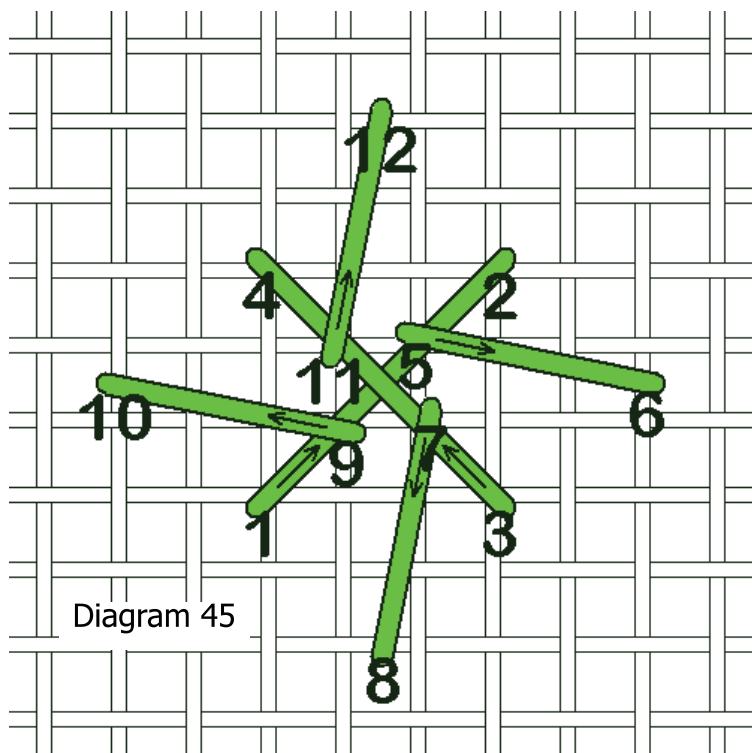


Diagram 45

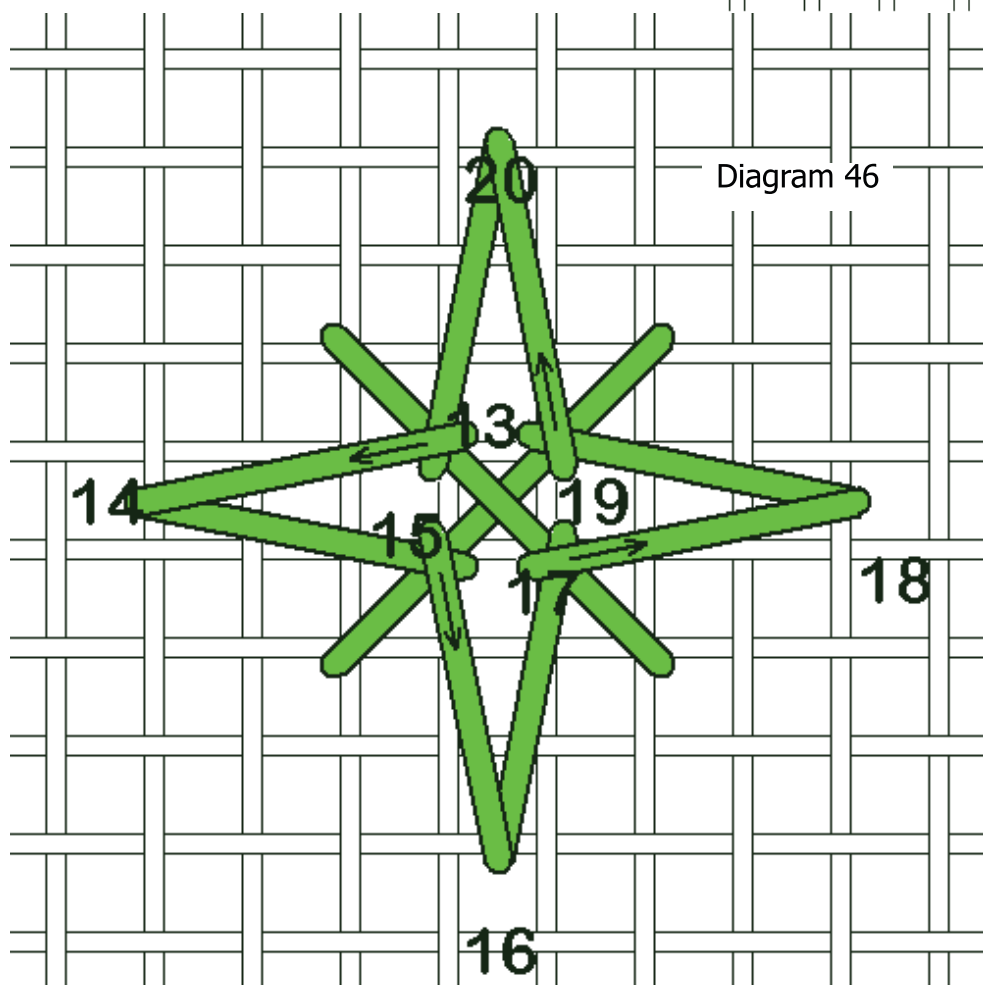


Diagram 46

Isn't this a pretty stitch!

Stitch 3 more twisting stars, sharing holes with the previous stars as shown. I'm only showing numbers at the beginning of the stitches, to cut down on some of the diagram clutter. You don't have to end the thread between each star, but go on to complete the cluster before ending the thread.

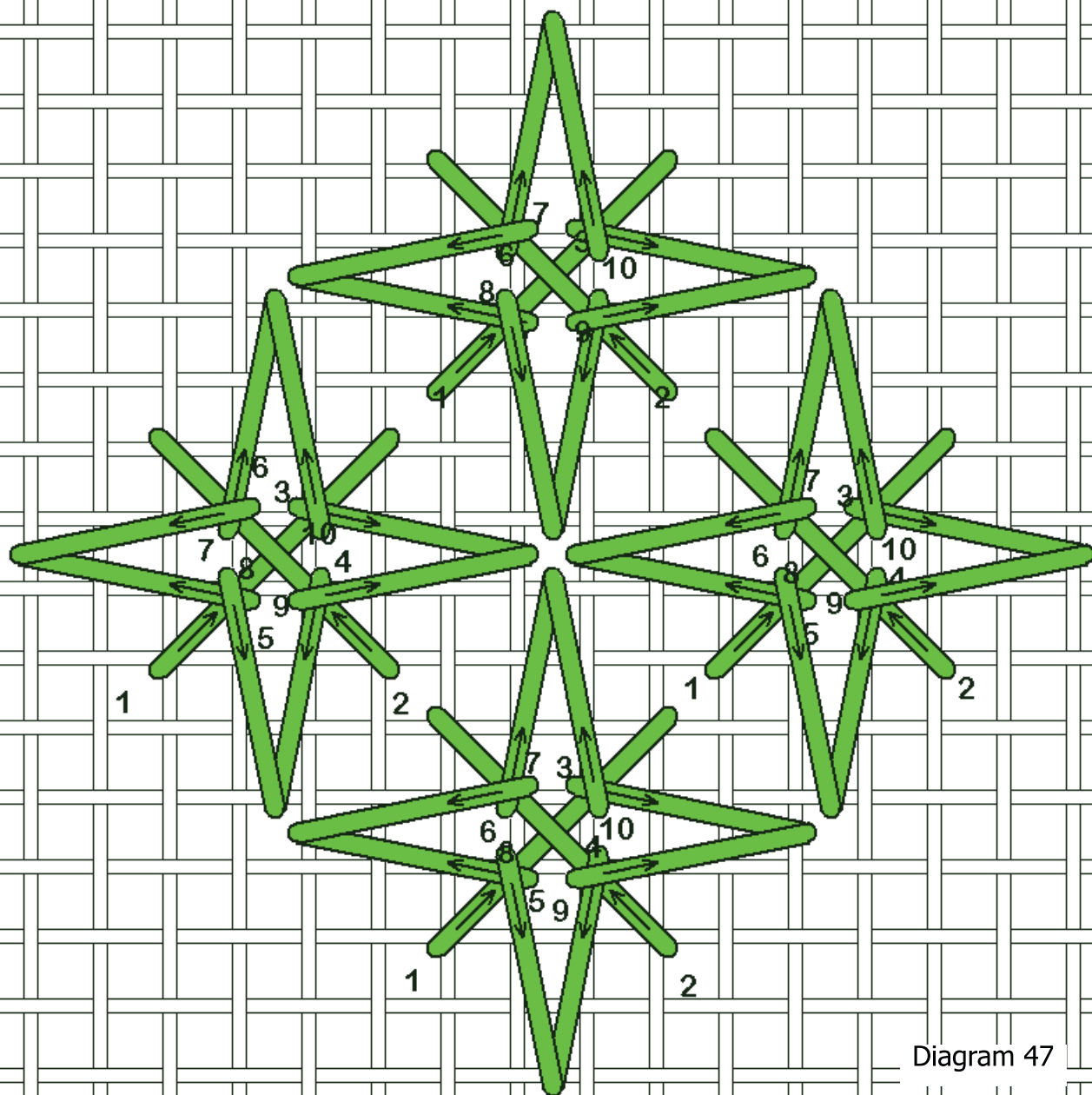


Diagram 47

Turn the canvas to stitch the remaining twisting star clusters. I found this to be easier than trying to count to a different spot.

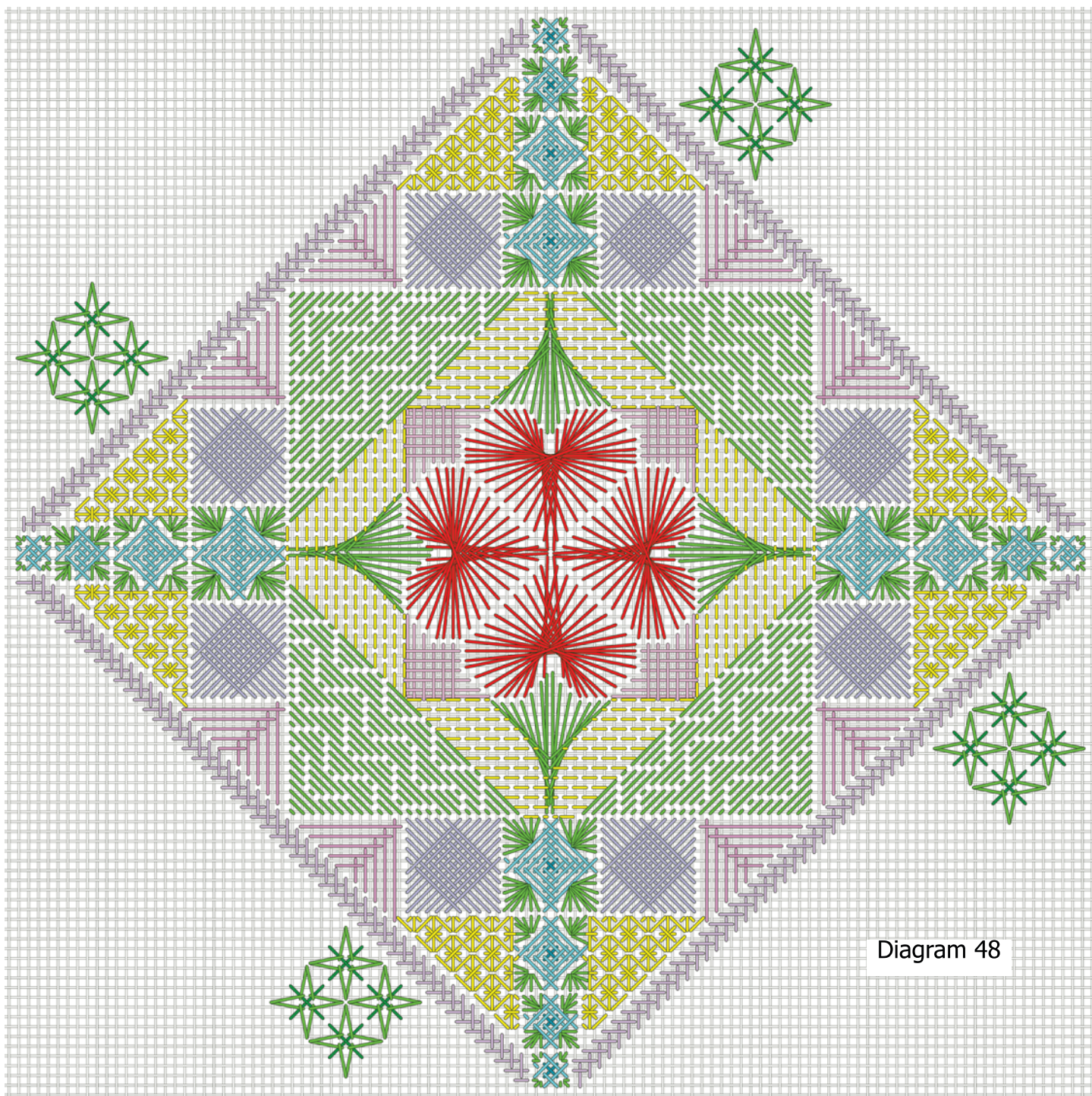


Diagram 48

This is what we have so far!