



## Botanical Blackwork SFL 2023 – Introduction

Hello and welcome to this SFL! Once again we have another free year-long weekly blackwork SFL with a botanical theme, because, well, I love and am inspired by plants, they make me happy to look at and grow and hopefully you will feel this way too as your stitching grows too in a very plant-like way! Hopefully, this introduction will explain how everything will work, but if you do have any questions, please contact me via the FB group, or by using the contact form on my website or email [clare@thesteadythread.com](mailto:clare@thesteadythread.com) and I will do my best to help.

### Access

In order to access this SFL you can either join my SFL Facebook group. You can also access via my website.

Access via my website is still free, but you will need to go through the checkout process so that you are automatically added to the access list.

### Schedule

Templates and borders are now available.

The first instalment will be released on Sunday 1st January and then after that, we will revert to Friday releases, so the next design will be released on Friday 6th Jan and then every Friday for forty-nine weeks again in total, meaning the final chart will be released on Friday 1st December.

### Layouts

This year hexagons are back! These can be surrounded by a super leafy one in either a square or circular format. We also have more squares, with an abundance of different individual borders. The weekly motifs are the same for both hexagons and squares, just arranged differently for each shape. Each week contains both leaves/stems and a flower/bud. There will be a key to show you where each week goes, you can stray from this if you wish, but they have been positioned to try to give a balanced design, so please bear this in mind if going off-road here! You may be pleased to hear that there will not be so much jumping about as we stitch this year!

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[www.thesteadythread.com](http://www.thesteadythread.com)

 The Steady Thread Blackwork SFL  The Steady Thread Modern Blackwork Embroidery  @thesteadythread

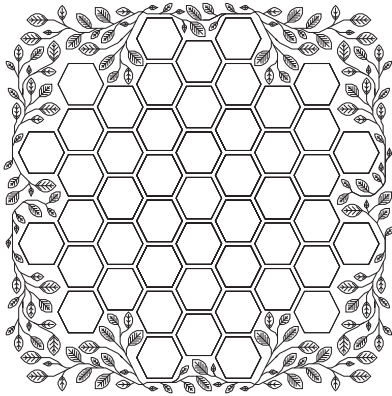
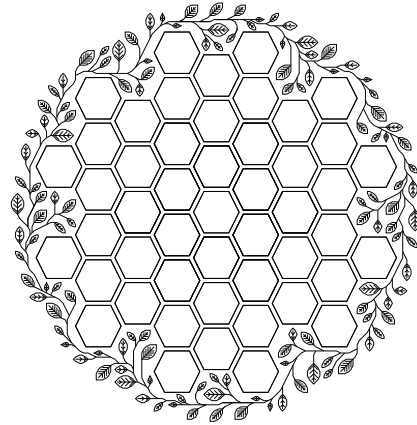
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## Hexagons layout

If you choose to do this leafy frame, there is either a circular or square format.

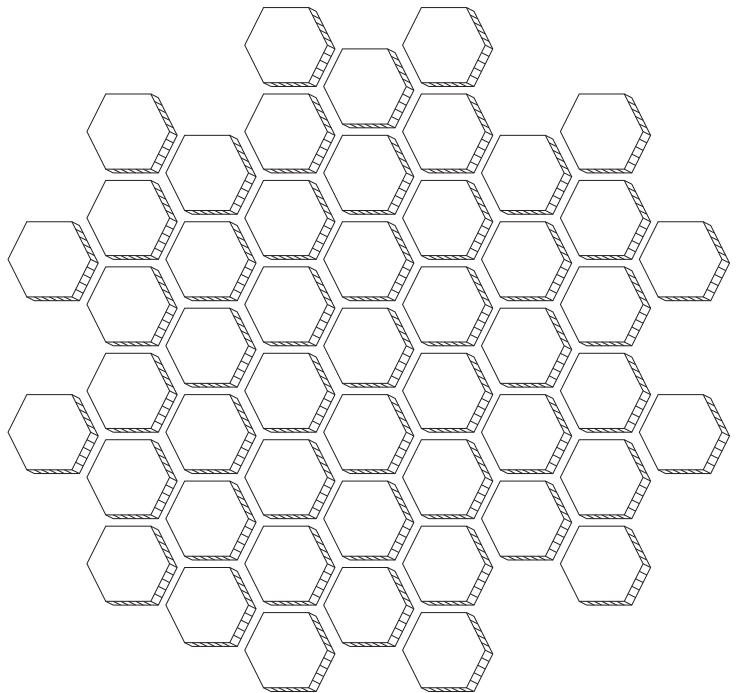
The circular version measures 202 x 202 stitches  
On 18 count this is 29 cms square (11.5 inches square)  
On 16 count this is 32 cm square (13 inches square)  
On 14 count this is 37 cm square (14.5 inches square)



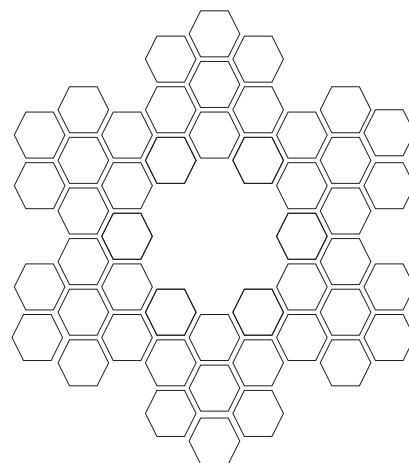
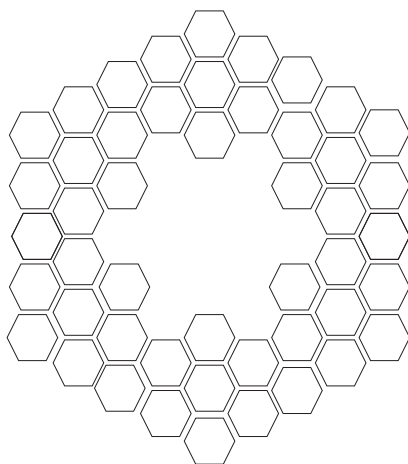
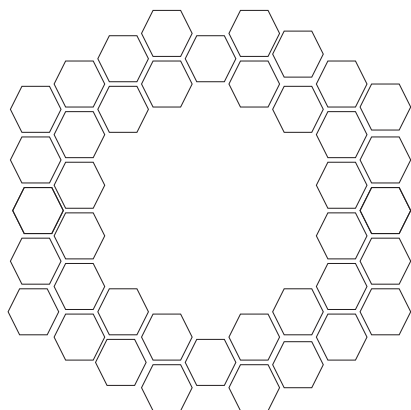
The square version measures 188 x 188 stitches  
On 18 count this is 27 cms square (10.5 inches square)  
On 16 count this is 30 cm square (12 inches square)  
On 14 count this is 34 cm square (13.5 inches square)

There is also guidance given for adding drop shadows to hexagons as I totally love the look this has given to square boxes in past years (I can't take the credit for either of these, both were ideas shared by our group members previously). If you wish to add this effect to all hexagons this layout will now measure

192 W x 182 H in stitches  
On 18 count this is 27 x 26 cms (10.5 x 11 inches)  
On 16 count this is 31 x 29 cms (11.5 x 12 inches)  
On 14 count this is 35 x 33 cms (13 x 14 inches)

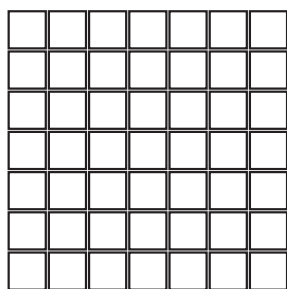


You may choose to not have a border at all and to perhaps just arrange your hexagons differently. This might mean you don't need to use all of the hexagons, and you may prefer this for a smaller project, you could also arrange them with a space in the middle where you may choose to add text, or something else, as those of you who have joined in before will know, I'm always happy for you to be as creative as you wish to be!



### Squares layout

Once again these can be arranged as a 7 x 7 block, or in any other way you wish.



The floral squares layout measures 138 x 138 stitches (with a 2 square gap between each tile)

On 18 count 20 cm square (8 inches square)

on 16 count 22cm square (9 inches square)

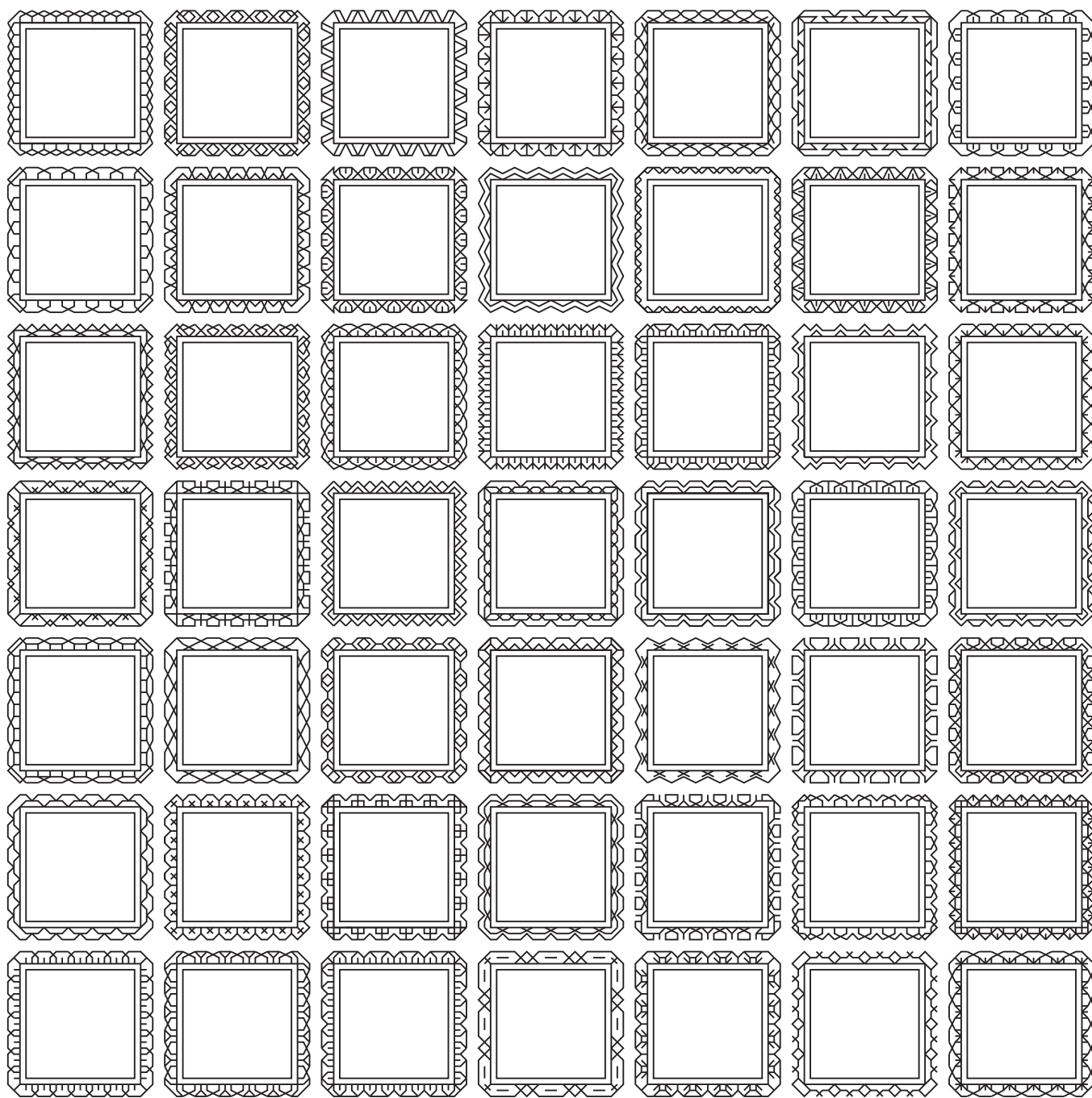
on 14 count 25 cm square (10 inches square)

If you add adrop shadow you will need a slightly bigger pieces of fabric (or to reduce the gap to 1 square)

Guidance is given on how to add a drop shadow to your squares to make them more tile-like (I really love this effect!)



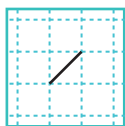
Then I started thinking about borders and got a bit carried away. I gave each tile a different tiny border, so you can use all of these if you like or choose a selection for a less busy more symmetrical piece, as usual I trust your judgement. You can also use the borders from last year's SFL for the block of 49 and I will add these back into the files for you to access if you wish.



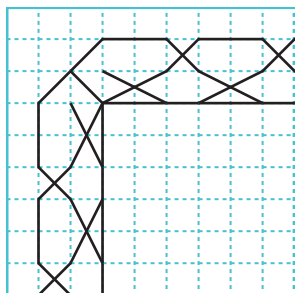
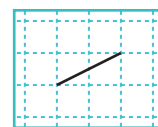
This layout measures 180 x 180 stitches  
On 18 count 26 cm square (10 inches square)  
on 16 count 29 cm square (11.25 inches square)  
on 14 count 33 cm square (13 inches square)



These borders (and indeed the botanical designs too) often use 'knight's move' stitches (so rather than making a diagonal by going from corner to corner of a square like this

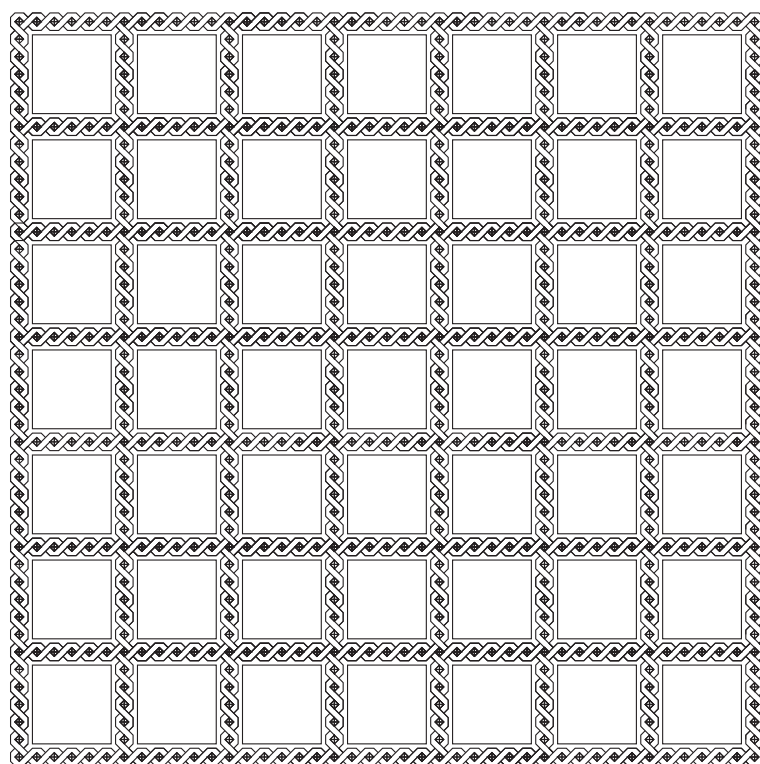


you make a slightly longer diagonal by counting, for example across by 2 and up by 1, (like a knight's move in chess)



and these are often used to make a longer kind of cross stitch type stitch as can be seen in the example here. These are not difficult, I just thought I should mention it.

Finally I have added the 'cabled' border used by one of our FB members last year, another idea from the group last year that I loved (as my FB group did too I think!) was the strong cabled border shared by one of our members, although not my idea/design which I freely admit, I am comfortable charting it up and sharing it will you all as it is a historic border, widely used for many years, it looks a bit daunting and complicated maybe, which is why I thought it might be useful to fully chart it, but is actually very simple once you break it down, with no half stitches, and I think looks lovely, I've always been a bit fascinated with any kind of weavy/twisty/3-d fill.

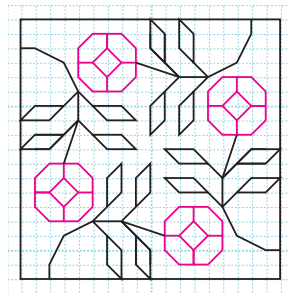


This layout measures 172 x 172 stitches  
 On 18 count 25 cm square (9.5 inches square)  
 on 16 count 28 cm square (11 inches square)  
 on 14 count 32 cm square (12.5 inches square)

Colour!

Each of the designs has an accompanying guide to show you where you could put colour if you wish as shown in this example chart

How to start planning colours? For me this is always tricky, I find colour unfathomably complicated sometimes, partly why monochrome blackwork will always have a special place in my heart!



We had a great suggestion one year about planning a palette, it was to find something you like, a print on a scarf, wallpaper etc and to take a section of colours from this as your colour range.

I've not used it myself but Stitch Palettes seems to be a fantastic resource if you have something you like the colour of and would like some help translating these colours into thread codes (<https://stitchpalettes.com/>) Or you could choose a single colour for all designs, we have seen some lovely mono red/blue versions in previous years. I would also suggest having a browse through the SflL galleries on my website for inspiration!

Each layout file has a blank template included for you to print out if you wish to doodle colours/ note thread codes onto, in case that helps.

### Thread Usage

I'm often asked about thread usage, but it is very difficult to predict how much thread will be used as it very much depends on what type of stitch you use (backstitch uses more than double running) your fabric count and also your stitching style, so I am going to not really commit I'm afraid, I would recommend using a thread that will still be available should you run short!

### Borders

You can choose from one of the borders provided or you could design your own. I have included some blank graph paper in the group files for this purpose. I love seeing your own ideas so please do feel free to do this.

So to recap in the 2023 SflL layouts files you will find

Layout PDFs for both hexagon and square layouts containing all the information you need to get your template stitched including blank templates to help you plan colours.

Paper with lots of little squares in case you want to plan your own squares layout

Paper with lots of little hexagons in case you want to plan your own hexagons layout

Graph paper in case you would like to design borders/text/other layout

Borders for squares for 2022 SflL (as they will fit this year's squares layout too)

If you have joined in previously you will know that you are very welcome to be imaginative with this SflL. In years gone by we have had many different layouts and ways fills were used, always a joy to see.

We have had text and poems added, chessboards stitched, biscornu and fabric dice, greetings cards, little fabric books, pillows, quilts so feel free to exercise your creative side if you feel inclined to, but of course, you are also most welcome to stitch up a template and simply add your stitching as the weeks roll by!