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## HOW TO *Make a Patchwork Placemat*

Placemats are a really lovely project to begin experimenting with basic techniques of patchwork. By using red cabbage and black beans to get delicate colours of blues and greys, you will be able to start understanding the subtle differences in the tones and shades of natural dyes. By placing one blue next to another you will notice how lights and darks can be used to form abstract designs in textiles. It is important at this stage to begin re-evaluating your perceptions around colour.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Set up two vats for the black bean and red cabbage dye, soak the black beans overnight and strain off the liquid into a dye pot in the morning. Keep the beans for cooking or you can simmer them for an hour to generate a stronger dye. Roughly chop a red cabbage and simmer until cooked. Strain off the cabbage water into a dye pot and keep the cabbage for eating later if you desire. Once your vats are ready, submerge four rectangles of mordanted fabric in each and heat gently for an hour, leaving to cool overnight.

2. Rinse dyed fabric, leave to dry, then press each piece. Take four of the prepared fabric rectangles and randomly cut them to give you a selection of odd, smaller squares and rectangles to form into a patchwork rectangle. Make sure your cuts are always straight and even, and only make two to three cuts per rectangle, so that you do not end up with lots of tiny pieces that are difficult to work with.

3. Now you can begin playing with how to piece them back together. Mix up the fabric pieces to give you varying shades of analogous colours that start coming to life as you place them side-by-side. Each placemat should measure roughly 43 x 28cm at this stage, so aim to rebuild your rectangles to this size. Once you have organised how you are reassembling them, machine-stitch the pieces together using a 5mm seam allowance.

4. Once all your patchwork rectangles are sewn together, press open the seams on the back. Take the four whole back pieces and trim them to make sure they match the size of your patchwork pieces. Now place one back piece right side up on your work surface and one patchwork piece right side down on top, aligning the edges. Machine stitch around three edges, using a 5mm seam allowance, to join the two pieces together. Repeat to assemble the other placemats.

### YOU WILL NEED:

#### Tools & Materials

Basic dyeing equipment Two buckets or vats  
Two wooden spoons  
Iron  
Fabric scissors  
Ruler  
Tailor's chalk

Sewing machine

Needles & Pins

8 Light to medium-weight cotton or linen mordanted rectangles, each 46 x 30.5cm

#### Dyestuff

200g black beans

1 red cabbage



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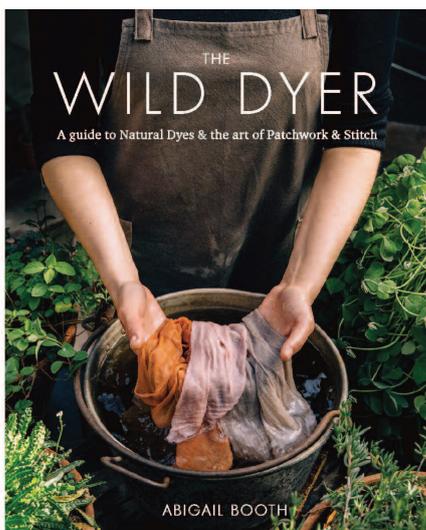
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5. Now turn the rectangles right side out and gently poke out the corners to make them crisp. It may help to trim the excess seam allowance on the corners before turning out to get neater points. Make sure to smooth out each placemat on a work surface so that they lie flat. Now fold the open ends in on themselves by 5mm, and pin in place.

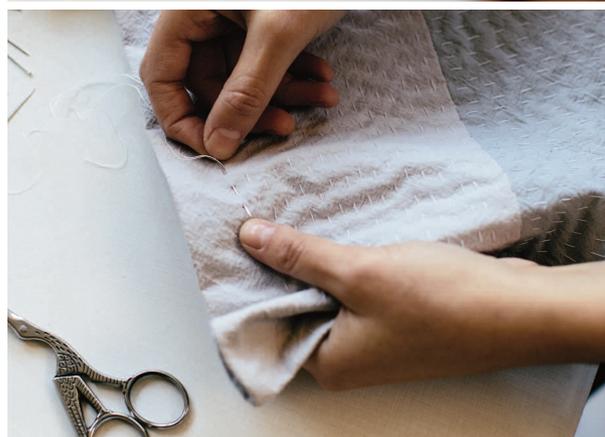
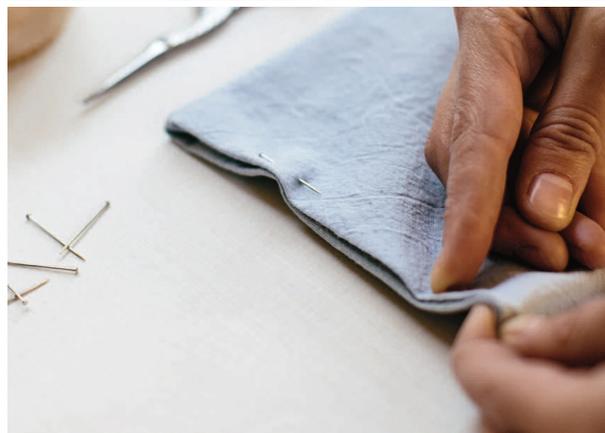
6. It is now time to hand-stitch the two layers together using a cotton quilting thread. I chose to sew each patchwork section in a different direction, but you can feel free to stitch in whichever way you like. Mark a chalk line in tailor's chalk down the centre of a block, anchor your knot between the layers and stitch parallel lines of running stitch on either side of the line. Once one block is complete you can then move on to the next one, sewing in a different direction.

7. To complete each placemat, use a blind stitch to sew up the open end, which you pinned in place previously. A blind stitch is a simple stitch, as seen below, where the needle passes unseen between the layers of fabric picking up both the front and back edge of your piece as it exits. That allows you to sew closed a seam without leaving any visible stitches, producing a neat and tidy finish. Press flat if necessary.

**This project is edited extract from *The Wild Dyer* by Abigail Booth of Forest and Found, published by Kyle Books 2017, £16.99 ISBN 978 0 85783 395 2**



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