

# QUILT YOURSELF A GARDEN



Multicolor floral prints can make fabric selection for your next quilt super simple. In addition, they can even make quilting it as easy as a spring breeze!

Many times students tell me that they can't draw. Then they conclude that their lack of drawing ability means that they will not be able to machine quilt very well. I counter their assumptions by asking them who insisted that they quilt designs strictly from memory. The blank stares they give me prove my point. Somehow they told *themselves* that they had to be good at drawing to do well at quilting. Nothing can be farther from the truth!

Some quilters have the knack of creating designs simply. However, you do NOT need to have a keen imagination, nor do you have to be an artist to be a successful quilter. You simply need to learn how to trace! Stand-up quilters trace all the time using a pantograph pattern. A design printed on long paper rests on the table of the longarm machine. The quilter uses a laser beam to point at the pattern line, and then moves the machine (and thus the laser) to trace the pattern and stitch the design. Both sit-down and longarm quilters alike often mark their tops directly using one of many marking tools available on the market (such as stencils and chalk, water soluble pens, or special marking pencils). This is simply another form of tracing, and it isn't difficult!

QUILTING THE  
QUILT



by **DAWN CAVANAUGH**

National Director of Education  
for American Professional  
Quilting Systems.

**Contact:** [dawn@apqs.com](mailto:dawn@apqs.com)  
[apqs.com](http://apqs.com)



PHOTO A

Unfortunately, there just isn't a stencil design for every quilt that you'll make. But that doesn't mean you have to create something out of your head or from memory. Fabrics themselves can give you some pretty stunning motifs that you can trace to create amazing quilting designs (see *Photo A*). The next time you're at your favorite quilt shop, study the fabric with a different purpose in mind. Look at those floral prints, baby prints, novelty prints, and even calicos as if they were coloring book pages,

ready for tracing. At this point ignore fabric color—you're only looking for the distinct outlines of shapes. While you can use more complex prints, for your first attempts at tracing fabric designs, stick with prints that have clearly separate elements. For example, choose a floral print where each flower appears by itself, not stacked on top of another.

Keep an open mind as you look at fabrics. Just because you see lots of detail in the fabric does not mean it should be included in a quilting design, nor should you eliminate it as a possible quilting design inspiration. Take a look at the gecko print in *Photo B*. Each gecko has an eye, along with color



PHOTO B



details that are important when using the fabric as *fabric* in a quilt. I've eliminated the detail in my gecko tracing. You can still tell that the shape is a gecko, but without all the detail it will be much easier to quilt. The butterfly I traced from the cute baby flannel (*Photo C*) only needs enough detail to identify it as a butterfly, not a specific species.

Study the prints for hidden design elements as well. Darting among the flowers on the floral pictured (*Photo D*) you'll see

dragonflies. I've traced a dragonfly for you to show how to pull out just enough detail to make out the shape. Even if your design doesn't look exactly like a dragonfly, as long as it looks like some kind of bug, it will work in your quilted garden!

The next time you're struggling with how to quilt your project, you may only need to look as far as your backing fabric to find the inspiration you need. You'll be able to "quilt a garden" even if you don't have a green thumb!



## STAY TUNED!

In the next issue, I'll show you how to use your traced designs in your quilting.

