

Sewing Tips for Blooming Nine Patch

Quickly creating nine patches, sewing with precision, & managing large numbers of blocks & squares into a quilt top.

Fussy cut four center squares from the focus fabric. Use no more than ¼ yard (9" x 42") for these.

Open flat and press each fabric with steam and starch. Hold by the selvage edges & “square up” the fabric before cutting.

Having freshly cut fabric, squaring up and cutting with precision are important for the smooth construction of this quilt.

Cut the number of strips and squares for each fabric as indicated on the tip sheet. A quilt rack or drying rack make a good tool for hanging your neatly pressed and cut strips before stitching to keep them crisp and smooth.

Begin by making the nine patches that surround the center (fussy cut) squares.

Use a 12-15 stitches per inch setting on your machine. A short stitch length will alleviate unraveling when subcutting the nine patch units. Also use a slightly “scant” ¼ inch seam allowance to insure that your nine patches are the same size as your squares. When stitching strips, the first two can be hand guided, under the presser foot, and stitched. Using your thumbnail and the pad of your index finger, “finger-press” the seam allowance open. The 3rd strip added should be pinned, then stitched – **See Photo 1.**

You'll make “A” units and “B” units for your nine patches. Each nine patch uses two “A” units and one “B” unit.

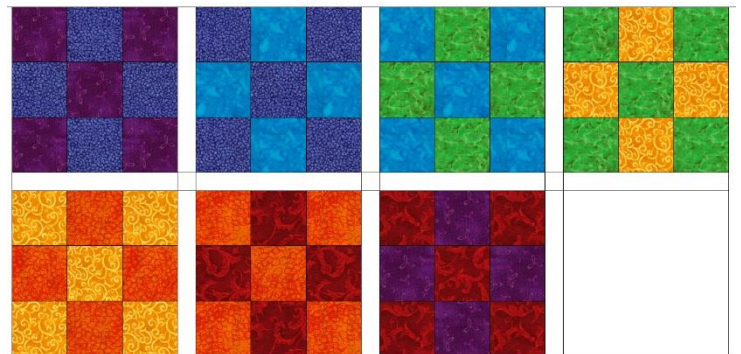
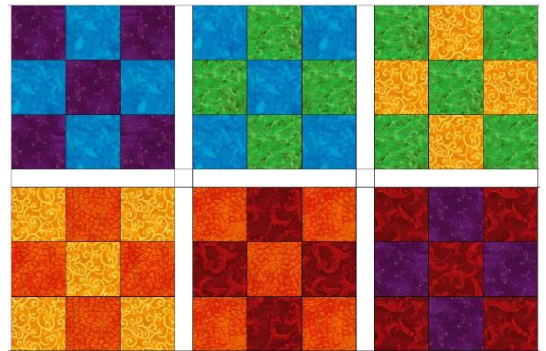
For the “A” units, finger press the seam allowance open, even though you will press the seam allowance to the outside strip by running the iron down the middle. Turn and press from the right side as well.

For the “B” units, finger press the seam allowance open, then press the seam allowance toward the center (purple) strip.

Next, layer the “B” on top the “A” strip with right sides together. Line up on a cutting mat and, using a ruler, cut the strips into unit. Promptly pin the leading edge of each seam allowance with the pins

pointing toward the raw edge. That way you can leave the pin in the seam allowance and sew past it. That helps to keep the nine patch seam allowances lined up and going the correct direction on the back. **See photo 2.**

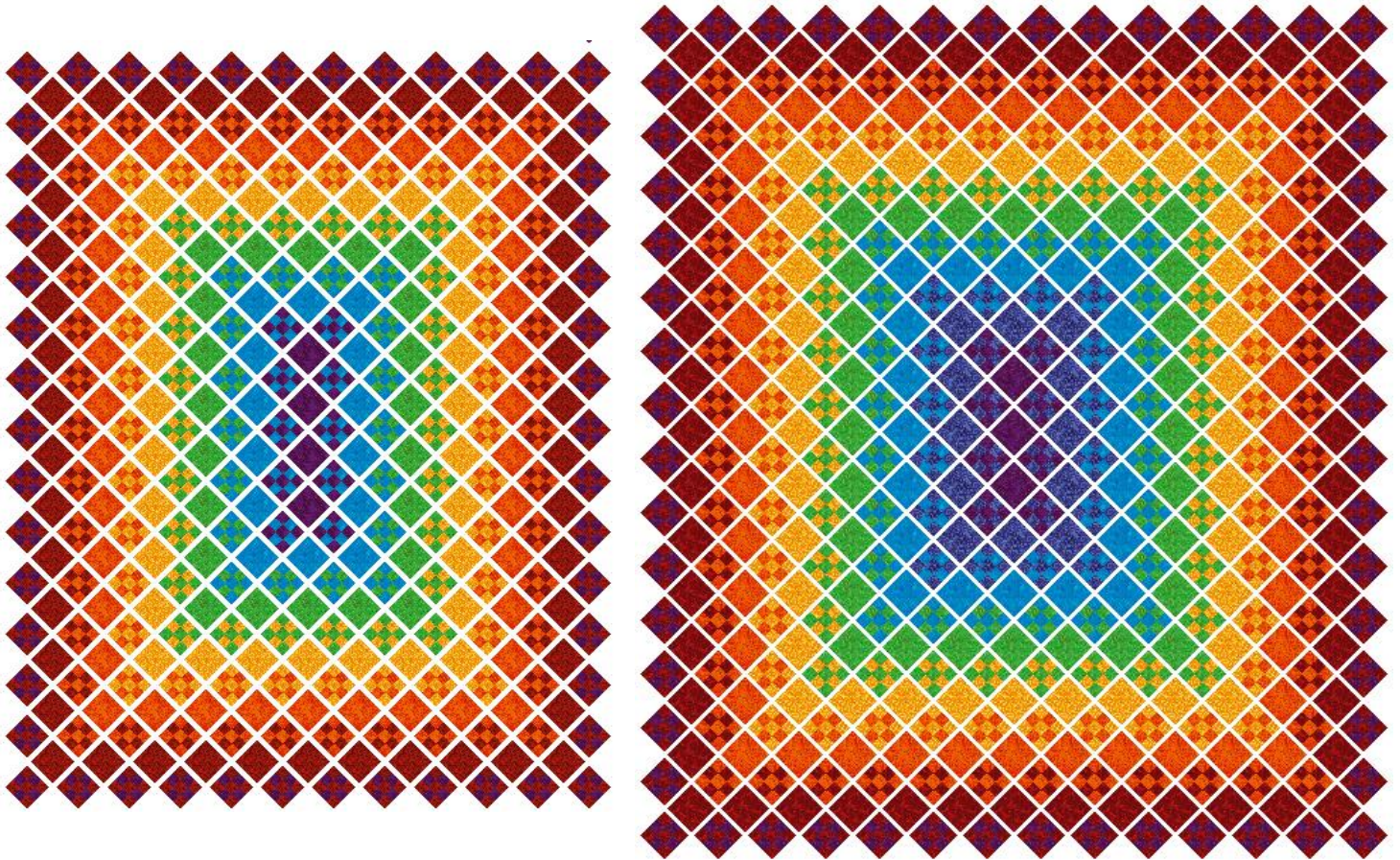
NOTE: Chain stitching means that you feed each set of units under the presser foot without cutting your thread between each.



At this point, lay a nine patch next to a square to insure that they are the same size. Adjust your seam allowance if necessary.

Repeat these steps & techniques to make all sets of nine patches.

You'll need a large design wall, carpeted area or bed to lay out all nine patches and squares as illustrated below for regular size (left) or queen sized (right).



Using a marker, write a number #1 -26 on a 1½” square of white paper (1 – 29 for queen-sized). Pin these numbers to the left-most and lower-most diagonal row. Leave the pinned number until all blocks are sewn into rows AND until all rows are sewn into a quilt top. See photo #7.

Remove & stack the nine patches and squares of each row with the pinned number on top.

Since you will be sewing lots and lots of individual seams, this is where “leaders” and “enders” are helpful to keep the amount of extra thread out of your quilt top. These are simply a 2” x 2 ½” square of fabric folded into thirds and stitched under the presser foot at the start and end of each seam. See photo #3.

Once a row is stitched, press the seam allowances toward the plain squares (away from the nine patch). First press from the back, then turn and press from the front. I sometimes pin one end of my row to the ironing board and use a little pull to insure that my seam allowance is pressed without any “foldover” in the seam. Press and check this from the front also. See photo # 4.

Once a set of rows are stitched, you can add the border rectangle to each end.

I like to pin them together with a pin at the leading edge of each nine patch. The “leading edge” is the first seam allowance to come under the presser foot. This helps to insure that your seam allowances remain in the correct direction. You'll be able to feel the “nesting” of the seam allowances as you lay out, smooth and pin

each row to the next. If you're using this pinning technique, you can leave the pins in as the needle generally doesn't meet the pin and if it does, only the narrowest point of the pin. See photos # 5 & #6.

I like to adjoin about four rows at a time, pinning, stitching and pressing the seam allowances between the rows to one side – insuring that my seam allowances are fully opened and there is no “fold-over” of the seam allowance.

Repeat for all rows.

At this point, add the large triangle of border fabric to two of the corners, centering it with the nine patch. Press toward the large triangle. Once the quilt top is stitched together, thoroughly press it with steam and possibly starch.

Lay out on a large flat surface with a cutting mat below the outer edges and trim the “points.” This leaves a bias edge on the majority of the quilt. You may wish to run a basting stitch 3/16” from the edge to stabilize for quilting. See photo #8.

