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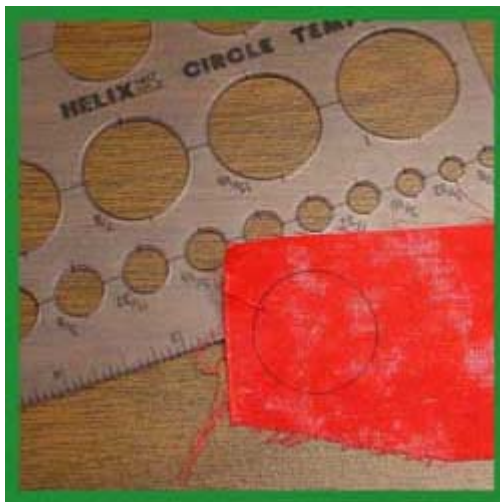
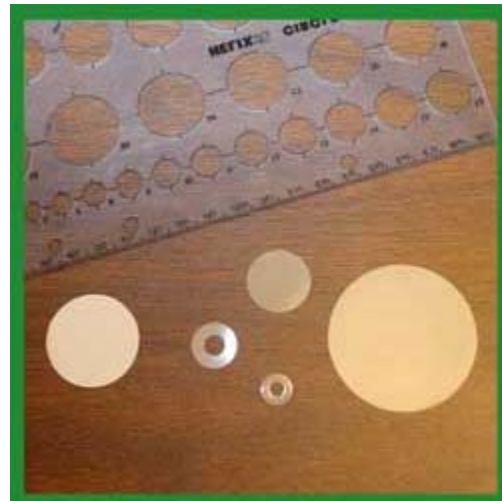
Let's make berries!

Many applique blocks have berries, grapes or other elements that are basically a circle. The method that I describe in this pictorial is not unique. Many of you already use this method. For those of you who are just learning, you will find that this method is fairly fool-proof.

Tools:

There are a number of products on the market that will simplify the process of making berries. Plastic die-cut circles are great. I prefer a heat resistant Mylar circle. It is possible to make the circles with regular plastic circle die cuts, however. We will discuss this alternate method. Check our [links page](#) for a source for the Mylar circles.

I also like a circle template that I picked up at an office supply store. It isn't necessary but it is nice.



Method:

First, I select a plastic or mylar circle that is the appropriate size. I then use my circle template to draw a circle on the backside of my berry fabric. This circle needs to be about 1/2" larger in diameter than the finished size of the berry if the berry is 1/2" in diameter or larger. That is, for a 1/2" berry I draw a 1" circle; for a 3/4" grape I draw a 1 1/4" circle. This will allow plenty of seam allowance. For smaller berries the seam allowance will have to be less.

Next, cut out the berry.



It isn't necessary to actually draw the berry plus seam allowance on the back of your fabric. It is perfectly OK to free-cut the berry. To do this, hold the berry in place while you cut around it allowing approximately 1/4" for seam allowance.

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Let's Make Berries - continued

With the wrong side of the berry up and a strong thread in your needle, stitch short, running stitches around the perimeter of the berry about 1/8" inside the outer edge.

Do not pull the thread up tight against the berry when you start. Instead leave about 3" of thread. This will be used to pull the berry tight around the mylar circle.

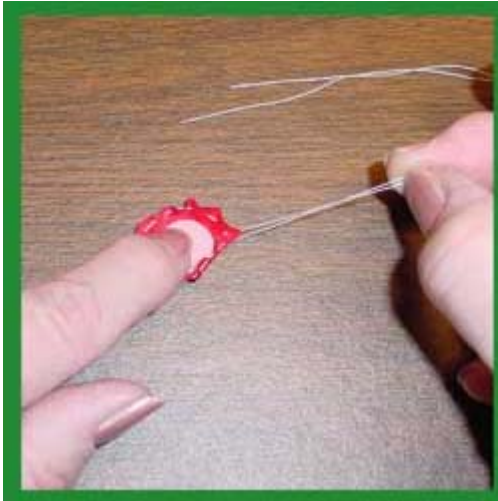


Continue stitching around the berry.

IMPORTANT: The most important stitch is the last stitch. Place your needle under the first stitch and take the thread through to the front of the berry. This small overlap will help

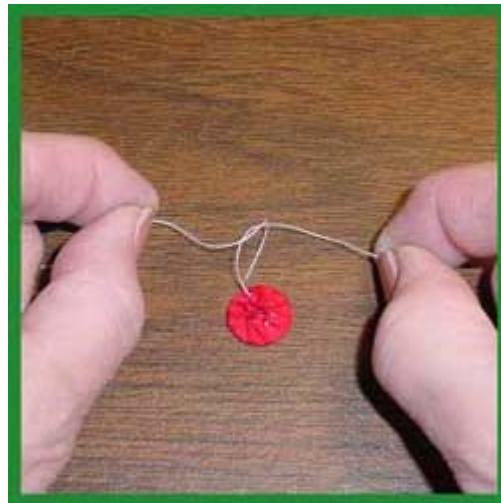


keep the berry from opening in the next few steps.



Place a Mylar circle inside the stitching on the wrong side of the berry. Firmly hold the Mylar circle in place while pulling on the threads to gather the circle.

Once the Mylar circle is in place, separate the threads and overlap once and pull tight. Do not make a knot. We will be loosening these threads in a later step.



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Let's Make Berries - continued

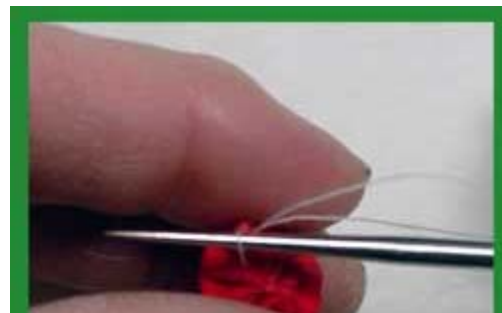
On a scrap of plain, white paper, spray a puddle of sizing. I avoid spray starch as is said to attract bugs. Place the gathered side of the berry in the spray sizing. Some of the sizing will soak around the edges to the front. This is OK. If the front becomes too saturated, I like to place the berry right side down on a towel to help remove the excess.

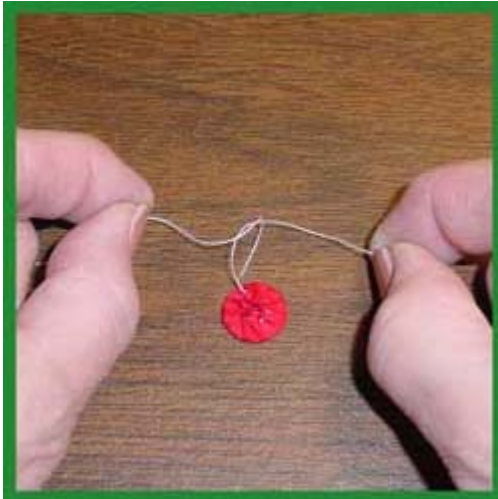


If you are using heat resistant Mylar circles you can place the berry right side down on your ironing board. Then using a medium setting, press the berry. **DO NOT PRESS ON THE RIGHT SIDE** as this will make the berry shiny.

If you are not using heat resistant Mylar circles, set the berry aside to air dry. This may take a couple of hours and you may need to turn the berry over to allow both sides to dry.

After the berry is dry, loosen the stitching with a pin, toothpick or sewing awl. Remove the Mylar circle. **DO NOT REMOVE THE STITCHING.**





Gently pull on the threads to tighten the berry to its circle shape. Adjust the gathers on the back to make a nice round circle. Pay particular attention to the edge of the circle as that is where we will stitch and it should be as smooth and round as possible. Our berry is now ready to stitch into place.

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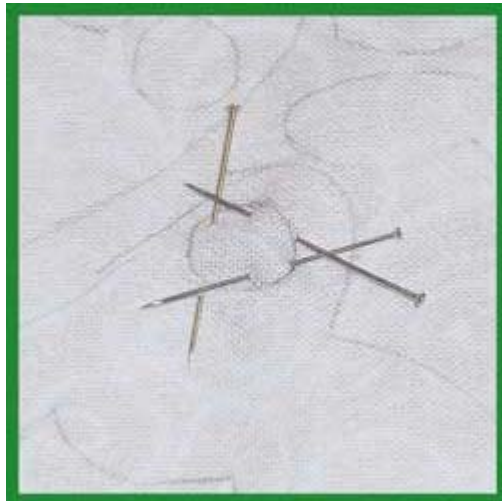
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Let's Make Berries - continued

Using a light box, window or other light source, pin the berry into place on the right side of the fabric. You may also use the [pin method of placement](#) to position the berry. I like to pin the berry in place with at least two pins placed at angles to each other so that the berry doesn't shift. I place the pins on the back side of my work and only pin through the seam allowance.

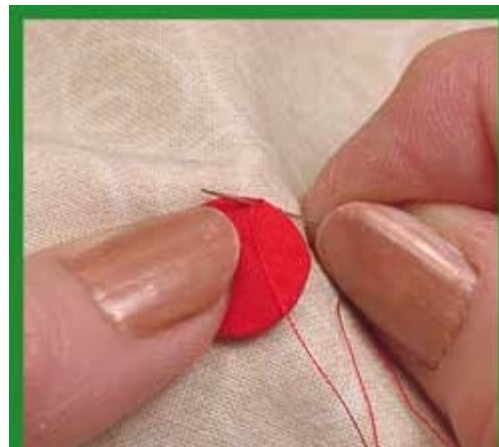


Back of work showing berry that is pinned in place.



Front of work showing berry pinned in place.

Using your favorite applique thread, stitch the berry into place with lots of tiny stitches.





Yyou may find that your berries are not perfect. That's OK. Nature doesn't make perfect berries either. However, with a little practice your berries will be so close to perfect that everyone will be asking how you make them.

Your little berries will also look terrific once the top is quilted.



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