

# Stitching

## Two Pink Flowers



Cherry blossoms are the small, delicate flowers produced by Sakura in Japan. The springtime bloom is a lavish spectacle albeit highly brief, it makes people marvel the short life of the bloom before the petals fall, covering the ground like snow and blown by the wind. The explosion of pale pink petals is a euphoric sight, but do you know there is more to their splendour than meets the eye?

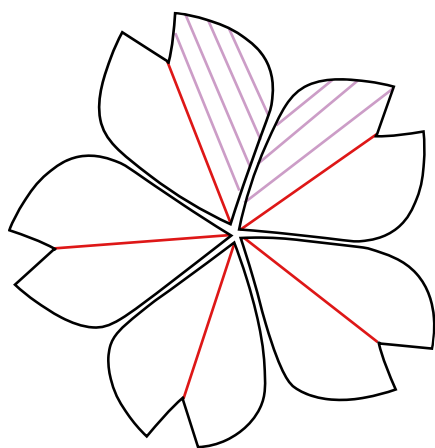
The significance of cherry blossoms in Japan is immense, making the flower national and cultural symbol of the country, revered throughout the world for its overwhelming beauty, and timeless expression of life, death and renewal.

Linked to Buddhist themes of mortality, mindfulness and living in the present, Japanese cherry blossoms are a timeless metaphor for human existence. Flowering season is vivid, sumptuous and heady, but tragically short – a visual reminder that our lives are just as fleeting.

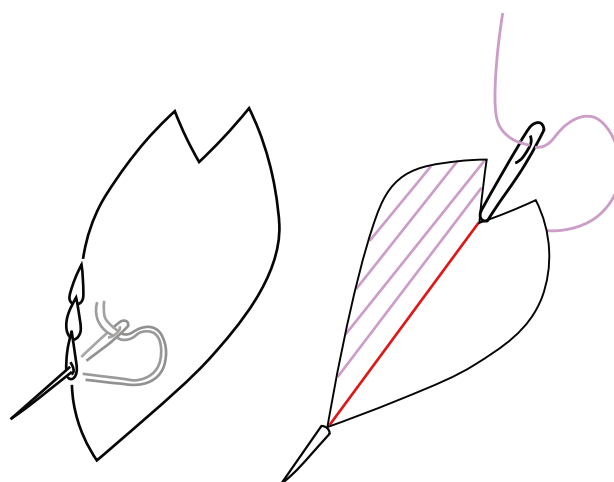
Why shouldn't we admire our time on earth with the same joy and passion? Why shouldn't we enjoy the grace surrounding us everywhere: our family, friends, a smile, a child's laugh, new flavours on our plate or the scent of green grass? Cherry blossoms remind us, to pay attention to simple things and enjoy embroidery.

Before starting stitching each element there is a need to contour each part with some stitches to provide sharp and even edges of each element. In some resources I found that originally the elements are contoured with a Running stitch. Sometimes a cotton cord can be sewn along the edge (as a base) of a petal to give it a raised look. I tried using a Running stitch but it appeared not enough to discipline my stitches, I needed more firm edge and tried to use a tambour hook for embroidering a “border” along the edges of petals, leaves and circles. Apart from rigidity it provided some padding too where it was needed (braids and some other elements of embroidery designs).

As less bulk and high, a Split stitch works well for “bordering” the petals. Processed with one strand of the embroidery thread (the same colour as the flower), it gives soft margin that you adhere to as you lay on some satin stitches on top.



▲ The order and the direction of stitches



▲ Split stitch

▲ Satin stitch

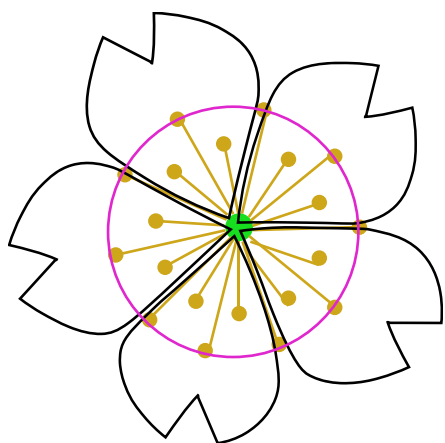
Dressing the petals is one more tricky thing, to practise. Before starting setting long stitches, it is better to mark the axis of each petal and mind them, while embroidering. Each stitch should be set parallelly to the previous one in a step of a needle. Do not make any knots in the end of the working thread, just make a couple of stitches and hide the "tails" under the satin layer.

You can interrogate me if the filling of the petal is made on both sides, and I answer that it is more convenient to have stitches on both sides, because it allows you to place a new stitch closer to the previously set one, compared to one-face satin stitching, which requires more space between each stitch.

Fill in the petals with one strand of Madeira Rayon 40 col. 1019 or with a thread of any other brand which seems to you suitable in colour. Mind the space between each petal, to make them look distinct.

Surely, the best is to use authentic Japanese flat thread made of genuine silk, though, being far from Japan or Japanese Embroidery Centre, try to be inventive by using rayon embroidery floss (one strand) or silk embroidery floss. Iron it beforehand and steam to make it plain.

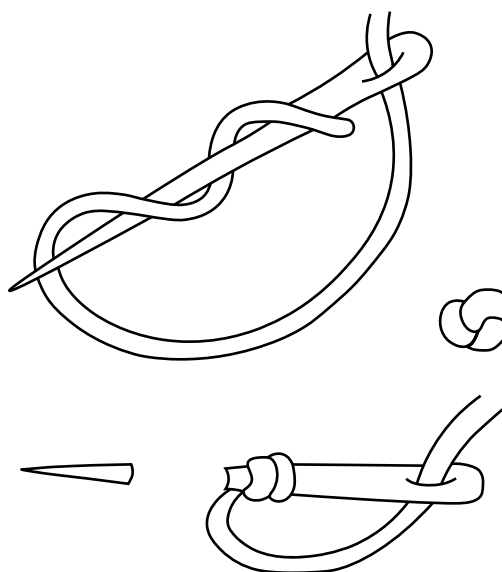
Smaller items, such as twigs and grass require stiffer thread, so I found it useful to apply some beeswax to the thread. Just to pull a strand through a piece of wax and iron it between two paper towels. That makes threads less hairy for a while, and tiny elements will be easier to stitch.



▲ Setting of the stamens

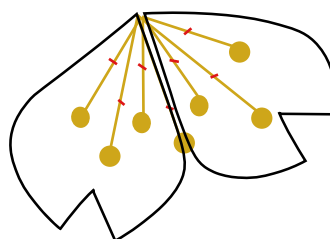
When the flower is clad in petals, some decorations need to be made. For stitching the stamens you need a silver metallized thread – Madeira FS Metallic 40, or any other that you like. In the diagram, the pink circle shows the area where you need to set the stamens.

Some stitches are long, some are short and, in the end of each stitch there is a French knot (indicated in yellow). All the stamens come out of the centre (indicated in green) and radiantly spread to the sides according to the axis of the petals.



▲ Stitching a French knot

In this design, the flowers are pretty small, and there is no need to couch the stamens for stabilising them. However, if you choose to scale the design by making it bigger, the flowers will also get bigger, so keep in mind that in this case, you will need to add a few couching stitches (indicated in red).



▲ Couching the stamens

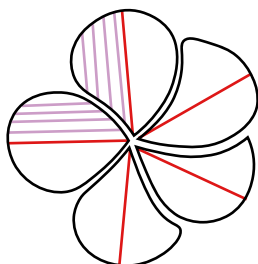
One of two pink flowers is ready. So now switch to a second that is slightly smaller. Process the edges of the petals with a Split stitch, mark the axis, if needed.

Fill in the petals in the same way as you just did. Spread the stitches from the centre out to the sides to construct stamens and crown them with tiny silver French knots.



## Red Satin Flower

Next up is a tiny red flower done with Madeira Rayon 40 col. 1186. As I said earlier, you may choose any of your favourite shades of red, or brand of threads too, just take into account the texture and the palette of the design.

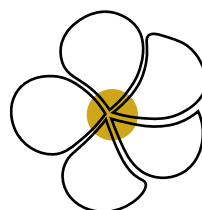


▲ The axis and the direction of stitches

This flower is similar to the pink, the same axis and stitch direction, only the petals are round and three petals fan out to the sides, revealing the heart of golden French knots.

Start by contouring in the usual way and fill in the petals one by one with a Satin stitch. Mind the space between each leaf, to make them look distinct.

When the petals are all-dressed, change the thread into Madeira FS Metallic 40 (gold 6), or any other metallized thread that you like. In the centre of the flower embroider a series of French knots to form a circle. It should not be too big or small, the diagram below shows the location of the flower “heart” and its approximate proportion to the petals.



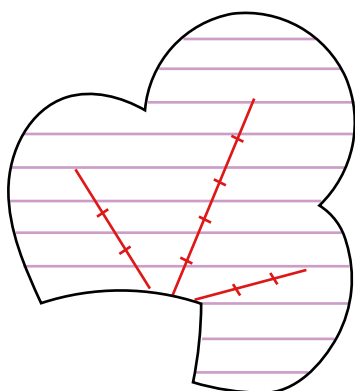
▲ Golden heart

Now the flowers are all in bloom!



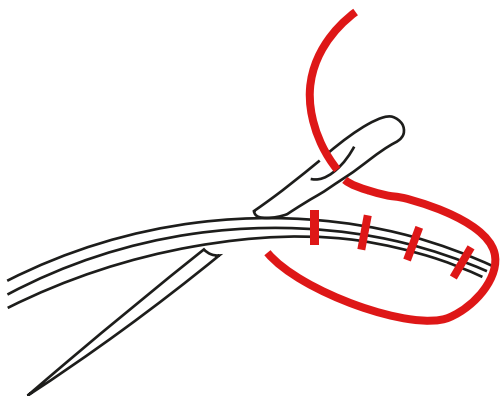
## One Tiny White Leaf

Next to the pink flower in the centre of the design, you will find a tiny white leaf. It is dressed in horizontal satin stitches (indicated in pink). Using one strand of Madeira Rayon 40 col. 1001 contour the leaf with a split stitch and later, lay out the series of even satin stitches.



▲ The stitches to lay out

Silver veins are next to be arranged on the satin surface. Using two strands of Madeira FS Metallic 40, spread three long stitches as it is shown in the diagram (indicated in red).



▲ Couching stitch

Secure these “veins” with tiny couching stitches made with a single strand of silver embroidery thread.

You can sew three long stitches on top of the white leaf and hide the end of the thread, just pulling it by the needle to the wrong side and securing in there. But doing the couching golden thread in some bigger and longer elements (such as circles and the fan), we will use a different method, which I will reveal in more details a bit later.

Stitch a tiny couching stitch crossing the silver “vein” on top in a step of two or three millimetres.

In the central “vein” there will be a few (4-5) tiny couching stitches, all of them should be at right angle.



Remember that all the elements need to have some space between one another. In the photograph you can see the flower, the leaf and the gap of two millimetres all along the edge in the area where they meet.