

Dyeing Wool Felt for Appliqué

by Judy Coates Perez

Sponsored by Rit Dye



Materials

Caution: All measuring and mixing tools used in this process should be dedicated to nonfood use.

- Rit® Liquid Dye: various colors (I used Royal Blue, Aquamarine, Teal, Kelly Green, Lemon Yellow, Purple, Tangerine, Scarlet, and Dark Brown.)
- Background: white 100% wool felt, 18" x 22"
- Appliqué: 6" x 9" pieces, white 80% wool 20% rayon felt
- Several disposable plastic containers for mixing dye, 3-cup size
- Plastic disposable container for dyeing background 8-cup size
- Spoon for stirring dye
- White vinegar
- Syringe or eye dropper
- Clothespins for dip-dyeing felt
- Rubber gloves
- Plastic wrap
- Paper towels
- Plastic table cover
- Microwave oven

INSTRUCTIONS

A variety of dyeing techniques were used to create the wool felt in this butterfly appliqué wall art piece. To create an ombré or shaded effect, one-color and two-color gradation techniques were used. Dip-dyeing and spot dyeing with a syringe were used for special accent effects. After dyeing, the wool is heated and finished in the microwave—so easy!

Dye the mottled sky background

1. Cover your work surface with a plastic table cover.
2. Shake the dye bottles. Wearing rubber gloves, measure and mix ½ tsp. Aquamarine, ⅛ tsp. Royal Blue, and 1 tbsp. white vinegar with 3 cups boiling water in an 8-cup disposable plastic container. Stir well.

Note: *When dyeing wool, white vinegar is used to help achieve brighter, more intense colors.*

3. Soak an 18" x 22" piece of 100% wool felt. Gently crumple it and squeeze out the excess water.

4. Place the felt in the dye solution. Add 1 more cup of boiling water and, using a large plastic spoon, poke the felt down into the dye solution. Loosely cover it with plastic wrap, place the container in the microwave, and heat on high for 1 minute.
5. Remove the container from the microwave, pour off the dye water and rinse the felt under cool water until the water runs clear. Dry flat.

Gradation or ombré dyeing

For appliqué pieces: Used to make blue spots on the butterflies

1. Take 1 of the 6" x 9" pieces of the wool/rayon felt.
2. Wearing rubber gloves, mix ½ tsp. Teal, ⅛ tsp. Kelly Green, and 1 tsp. white vinegar with 1 cup very hot (almost boiling) water in a 3-cup disposable plastic container. Stir well.

Note: *Shake the dye bottles before measuring.*

- Wet the felt with warm water and gently squeeze out the water.
- Attach wood clothes pins along the top edge of the wool. Holding the felt vertically, slowly dip the bottom edge of the felt into the dye solution and lift it out. Then immerse the felt in a little deeper and lift it out again. Repeat this process several times until all the felt has been immersed in the dye solution.

Tip: If you want a more extreme gradation, add more hot water to the dye solution halfway through dips.

- Lift the felt out of the dye and let excess dye drip off into the container. Place the felt on a piece of plastic wrap and then fold the plastic over, completely enclosing the felt. Place the wrapped felt on a paper towel and heat it in a microwave on high for 30 seconds.
- Let plastic-wrapped felt cool. Open the plastic carefully to allow any excess steam to escape. Rinse the felt under cool running water until the water runs clear. Hang to dry.

Two-color gradation or ombré dyeing

For the wool used in the leaves

- Take another 6" x 9" piece of the wool/ rayon felt.
- Wearing rubber gloves, prepare 2 dye solutions in separate 3-cup plastic containers (recipes below). Add 1 cup very hot (almost boiling) water to each container; stir well.

Note: Shake the dye bottles before measuring.

Light Green

- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. Kelly Green
- 1 tbsp. Lemon Yellow
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. white vinegar

Dark Green

- 2 tsp. Evening Blue
- 1 tbsp. Lemon Yellow
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. white vinegar

- Wet the felt with warm water and gently squeeze out the excess water.
- Dip one end of the felt into the lighter green dye solution $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way and lift it out of the dye. Carefully turn the felt over and dip the other end of the felt into the darker green dye $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way, overlapping the previous color in the middle. Lift the felt out of the dye and dip it again $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way in the darker green dye. Lift the felt out of the dye, and let the excess dye drip off into the container.
- Place the felt on plastic wrap. Fold the plastic over, completely enclosing the felt. Place the wrapped felt on paper towel. Place it in the microwave and heat it on high for 30 seconds.
- Let the plastic-wrapped felt cool. Open the plastic carefully to allow excess steam to escape. Rinse the felt under cool running water until the water runs clear. Hang to dry.

Dip-dye folded technique

Alternate technique used to dye leaves

- Following the dye preparation instructions above, mix 2 colors of dye in 2 separate containers.
- Wet the felt with warm water and gently squeeze out the excess water.

- Fold the felt in half the long way. Holding the felt along the folded edge, dip the 2 long, cut edges of the felt into the lighter dye solution $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way and lift it out. Turn the felt over so the fold is now on the under side and dip the felt into the darker solution, overlapping the edge of the lighter dye. Lift the felt out of the dye, and let the excess dye drip off into the container.
- Place the felt on the plastic wrap. Fold the plastic over, completely enclosing the felt. Place the wrapped felt on a paper towel. Place it in the microwave and heat it on high for 30 seconds.
- Let the plastic-wrapped felt cool. Open the plastic carefully to allow excess steam to escape. Hang to dry.

Dye embroidery floss

Embroidery floss can be dyed to match or contrast with the appliqué work.

- Any of the gradation and dip-dyeing methods can be used to dye embroidery floss. After dyeing, let residual dye drip off of the hank of floss. Then place the dyed floss on plastic wrap. Fold the plastic over the floss, enclosing it. Place it on paper towels and microwave on high for 30 seconds. Rinse it under cool running water until clear. Dry flat on a paper towel.



Dye a series of gradation tints

Used to dye felt for hydrangea flowers with gradual, lighter gradation

1. Cut 4–6 pieces of felt, 4½" x 6".
2. Wearing rubber gloves, measure and mix 1 tsp. Royal Blue, ¼ tsp. Purple, and ½ tsp. white vinegar with 1 cup very hot (almost boiling) water in a 3-cup container. Stir well.

Note: Shake the dye bottles before measuring.

3. Wet a piece of felt and immerse it completely into the dye solution. Remove it, place it on plastic wrap, and wrap up.
4. Place a second piece of felt into the same dye solution, remove it and wrap it in plastic. Repeat this process until the lightest desired color is

achieved. Hot water can be added to the dye solution between immersions to create more extreme value shifts.

5. Follow with previous heating and rinsing steps.

Spot dyeing on dyed background

Used to make dots on the yellow flowers

1. Cut a piece of felt, 4½" x 6".
2. Shake the dye bottles before measuring. Wearing rubber gloves, measure and mix 1 tsp. Golden Yellow with ½ tsp. white vinegar; add 1 cup very hot (almost boiling) water to a 3-cup container; stir well.

Note: Shake the dye bottles before measuring.

3. Immerse the wet felt completely into the dye solution. Remove it, and place it on plastic wrap.
4. Mix 1 tsp. Tangerine with 1/2 tsp. white vinegar; add 1 cup very hot (almost boiling) water; stir well.
5. Using a syringe, squirt small amounts of the darker dye onto the felt in desired locations.
6. Wrap the felt in plastic wrap and follow previous heating and rinsing steps. ■

judycoatesperez.com

Rit Dye Color Recipes Used for Wool Felt Appliqué

by Judy Coates Perez

Mottled, Cloudy Sky Background

Use 18" x 22" 100% wool felt

- ½ tsp. Aquamarine
- ⅛ tsp. Royal Blue
- 1 tbsp. vinegar
- 3 cups water

Wool Appliqué Pieces

Use wool/rayon felt, cut 6" x 9"

Note: For dye recipes for the wool appliqué pieces, mix dyes with 1 cup water and 1 tsp. white vinegar.

Butterfly

Top wing

Gradation of 2 colors

- Light Pink**
- ½ tsp. Tangerine
- ⅛ tsp. Scarlet
- Dark Pink**
- 1 tbsp. Tangerine
- ½ tsp. Scarlet

Bottom Wing

- 2 tsp. Scarlet
- 1 tsp. Tangerine

Brown Spot

- 1 tsp. Dark Brown

Blue Spots

Gradation of 1 color

- ½ tsp. Teal
- ⅛ tsp. Kelly Green

Body

- 1 tsp. Cocoa Brown
- 1 tsp. Sunshine Orange

Hydrangea Flowers

4–6 pieces of 6" x 4½" wool/rayon felt dyed in succession

After dyeing, the first piece of wool, add an additional ¼ cup of hot water, then immerse the next piece of felt. Repeat until lightest desired tint is reached.

- 1 tsp. Royal Blue
- ¼ tsp. Purple

Leaves

2 color gradation

Light Green

- ¾ tsp. Kelly Green
- 1 tbsp. Lemon Yellow
- Dark Green**
- 2 tsp. Evening Blue
- 1 tbsp. Lemon Yellow

Yellow Flowers

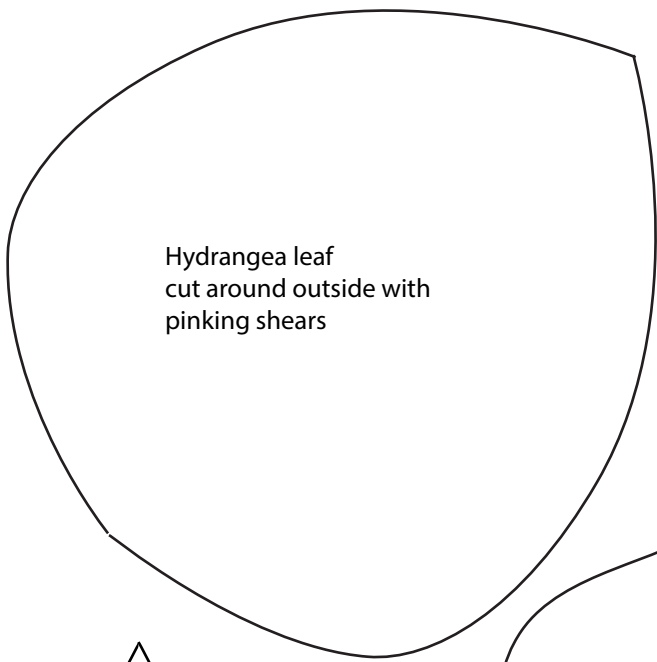
- 1 tsp. Golden Yellow

Dots

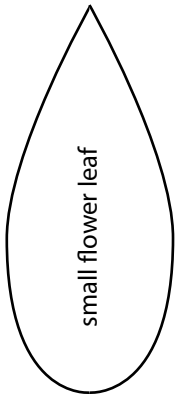
- 1 tsp. Tangerine

Small Leaves

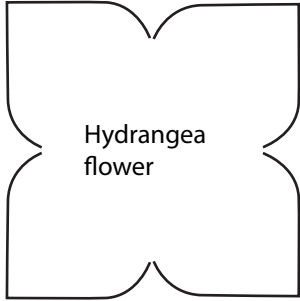
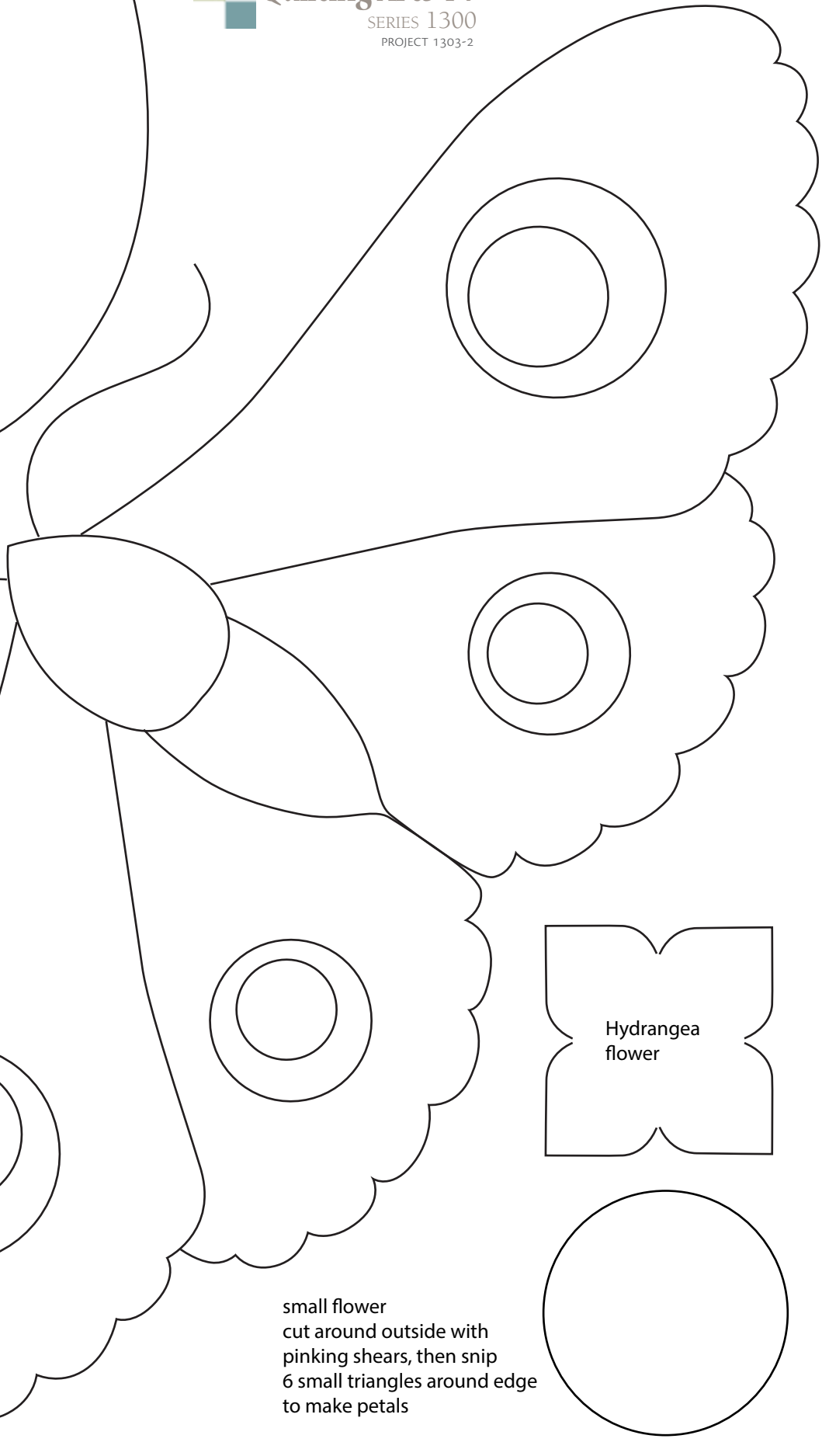
- ½ tsp. Kelly Green
- 1 tbsp. Lemon Yellow



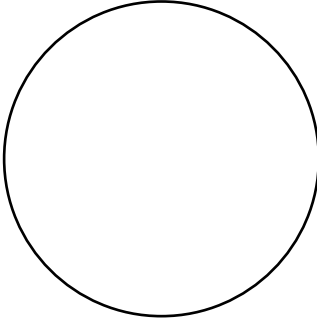
Hydrangea leaf
cut around outside with
pinking shears



small flower leaf



Hydrangea
flower



small flower
cut around outside with
pinking shears, then snip
6 small triangles around edge
to make petals