

Sew a Block a Day by Debby Kratovil

I heard of a professional quilter who challenged herself to stitch a quilt block a day FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR. It seemed an impossibility for anyone other than a woman stranded on a desert island with her sewing machine, fabric and thread. It certainly couldn't apply to me - a busy wife and mother, living in a very large metropolitan city with an outside job to help put two daughters through college. Where did this lady find not only the time to sew a quilt block each of the 365 days in a year, but where did she get the mental persistence to make one on her busiest days, her down days, her days when she traveled? I never got a chance to ask her. No need to wait for New Year's Day (though I did) to begin. I just set out to do it! Here is how...

Tips

1. One basic rule trumps all others - sew a block each day, everyday. This can be as simple as a 4 Patch or 9 Patch or as detailed as an appliquéd Sunbonnet Sue. Just stitch a block, any block, any way.
2. It can be any size. (Putting them all together after the year has ended will be another story!)
3. Spend some time scouring pattern books and magazines to get ideas for your blocks. Dig through your box of acrylic templates that you've been meaning to use "someday" and match a few to the block patterns you've chosen. One day I made a Nine Patch, the next day I used a Nine Patch as a center and added outside triangles for a Sister's Choice Block. Just the combination of squares and half-square triangles can make hundreds of blocks!
4. To help get you through each month with a general theme, choose one fabric to use for each day's block. For example, I chose a wintery blue swirly fabric for my first month's of blocks in January. I challenged myself to include some of this blue in each of the 31 blocks. This helped me when it was time to stitch my blocks into a quilt (or quilts). Thirty-one blocks tied together with one consistent use of blue helped unify them into a quilt. Of course, as I look at the blocks today, I went off on a tangent. But I did stay with a "girly, fairy" print from a past Benartex collection.

February is known for Valentine's Day and so I chose a red and white theme

for that month. March, where I live, comes alive with forsythia bushes (what my girls called “banana bushes” when they were little) and so I chose a sunny yellow for those 31 blocks. The choice is yours.

5. It is not wrong to cut patches ahead of time. You may even have some small units (consisting of a few patches) left over from the previous day’s block work and it’s ok to incorporate them into another day’s block. But you can’t sew a few days worth of blocks at a time. One block a day.

6. Gather resources ahead of time. Are you going on a week’s vacation or a 3 day business trip? Plan a simple appliqué project with a precut background square. Cut a few hearts or simple flowers and put into a ziplock plastic baggie with needle and matching thread. Take enough for making a block a day. You may even put together “emergency” kits for those days you have to rush away from home unexpectedly. Grab them as you go out the door.

7. Keep a journal, no matter how sketchy your details for each day. It can be as short an entry as a sentence stating what block you sewed that day and the size, or as long as you desire, chatting away about any philosophical item relating to what you’ve discovered about your inner quilting life.

8. Don’t despair if you’ve missed a day. Afterall, we’re human and life happens! If you really feel guilty, make two blocks the next day to catch up.

9. You may be asking, “OK. How did YOU do?” Well, I made it through March with no mishaps. Then I ran out of steam. But 3 month’s worth was really fun.

10. There’s nothing like companionship when we start a new regimen. Grab a friend and challenge him or her to join you and compare blocks and notes at the end of the first week or the first month. Inspire each other and have fun!