

THREAD CHOICE MATTERS—A LOT!

by Cindy Scraba

After a decade of providing thread sales and therapy to users, it's time to prescribe a few quick remedies in my column! Consider asking yourself these queries while planning projects to ensure a stress-free quilting zone. My mantra has always been *thread choice matters*—a lot. This self-dialogue process takes only seconds to actuate. I promise you results without side effects!

QUICK CHECKLIST

1. Piecing threads?
2. Bobbin threads?
3. Quilting threads?
4. Embellishing threads?
5. Needles?

Each quilter's thread choices vary depending upon their projects. Quilts often evolve from blocks made in a class, a workshop or from participation in various challenges like #CQAPostcardChallenge, #gatewaytoadventure or #52blocks52weeks!

Whether you create a bed or art quilt, a wall hanging or fibre art piece, a wearable or décor item, there are lots of smart thread options to consider *before* sitting down to sew.

PIECING/ASSEMBLY THREAD DECISIONS

Let's agree upfront your top piecing thread options can be cotton, polyester or silk. In simplest thread language, it's the size—for example, diameter, gauge, thickness, or weight—you need to assess. Some quick queries:

- Will the project be laundered, is it a wall hanging or perhaps an heirloom?
- What temperature will your iron be, if pressing?



Threads to quilt, piece, embellish!

- What fabrics and fibre types are you sewing?
- Are you colour matching?
- Are you creating amazing postcard art (hint, hint)?
- Not a question, perhaps, but a fact is to anticipate *unstitching*—sorry about this reality!

Generally speaking a 50-weight thread with two or three plies is most common for piecing. I prefer MasterPiece™ cotton or So Fine™ polyester both by Superior® Threads for their quality and customer success stories, including my own. A thinner thread option is The Bottom Line™ (60 weight, two-ply poly) for finer piecing where multiple seams intersect and loved

by *hexagoners*. Also Kimono Silk Thread™ (#100) performs extremely well for flat and fine seams, hexies, miniatures, heirloom projects and more. Other thread manufacturers may have their own brand names to cross-reference.

BOBBIN THREAD DECISIONS

Your bottom thread is the unsung hero and often overlooked in the decision-making process—it definitely matters! It does half the work and is due equal credit. Various manufacturers have options for bobbin threads. Take your lead from fibre artists and embroiderers who routinely use a lighter-weight bobbin thread to reduce bulk (often a 60-weight, poly, bobbin thread).



Stress-free Hummingbird expertly pieced and hand quilted by Pauline Humbke (Vancouver, BC) with Superior® Treasure™ hand quilting thread.

TOP QUILTING THREAD DECISIONS

Top quilting threads should be planned earlier in the process; however, once a quilt top or project is nearing completion, we see a clearer vision coming into focus. We don't always know which colours we'll desire or how much thread yardage we'll need until we get this far. Will you sit next to a domestic machine or will you hand quilt? Perhaps this is an opportunity to shop for more threads—admittedly, a necessary part of the process.

If you hire a longarm quilting service you're still involved in the decision-making process. More questions to ponder: budget, free-motion quilting, meander, intense micro-quilting, stitch-in-ditch or straight stitches, for example, repetitive matchstick? Your choices will be based on the project and situation. It's your quilt!

EMBELLISHING THREAD DECISIONS

Embellishment threads are a personal part of the creative process and reflect the heart and soul of a quilter. Thread imparts personality, texture, design elements and function. Choices are endless considering the myriad of thread types available, weights, fibres and how they're applied by hand or machine. Award-winning challenges (wink) and quilts always showcase embellishment threads

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EDUCATION & INSPIRATION

are the focus of my column, thread talks and workshops.
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NEEDLES: MACHINE & HAND

A needle is the essential tool that weaves and connects thread to fabric. The stitching outcome (whether intricate or industrial) is influenced by the needle's diameter, design, tip and size of eye. For basic piecing an #80/12 needle size/diameter is common; however, a #70/10 is better when using a finer thread. The versatile topstitch design has a sharper tip and elongated eye. Plus this needle accommodates a wide range of thread thicknesses for multi-purposes. In previous articles, I've discussed the benefits of a titanium-coated needle for economical benefits and overall improved performance. Manufacturers recommend a #90/14 needle for home machines and #18 MR 4.0 for longarm machines when top quilting layers using quilting weight threads.

Hand needles are also essential tools with extra options. One of my previous articles, *Hand Needles—A Primer* (featured in *Canadian Quilter*, spring 2018) covered this topic in detail. The needle length, eye shape and various designs allow for more freedom to create unique made-by-hand stitches.

Hopefully this checklist will become a natural thought process—your choices matter and make a difference. Refer to the list whenever you plan a project, sit down to your machine(s) and especially for thread shopping!

Happy stress-free quilting! 🍁