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 THE BIRMINGHAM

Try stitching a star in a hoop for Christmas

Try framing this sparkling star ornament in a colorful hoop. Hang one or more on your doorway, on your tree, or wherever you need a Christmas jewel.

Use a four-inch round hoop with a tightening screw. These come in wood or brightly colored plastic. The green plastic is particularly Christmasy, but the wooden hoops can be decorated. Paint them, or glue velvet ribbon or glittering trims around the outside of the hoop. Use ordinary white glue.

This star pattern can be stitched on No. 14 needlepoint canvas with a stranded needlepoint yarn (don't use tapestry yarn). Or embroider it with floss on evenly woven cloth. An evenweave cloth has the same number of threads per inch in both directions—approximately 14 for this project.

Whether you use canvas or cloth the stitching is the same.

Your materials will include the hoop and a six-inch square of canvas or cloth. Use a No. 18-29 tapestry needle. Wools or embroidery flosses should be bright red, dark red, bright green and dark green. Use the needlepoint background in white wool. The cloth will, of course, need no background stitching.

If you want to add glitter, buy a small amount of metallic gold embroidery thread. "Gleamline" works well.

Stitch on your hand, not in the hoop. This is added later.



SEPARATE THE TWO rings of the hoop. Center the smaller ring on your cloth or canvas. Draw a lightly penciled circle around the outside of the ring.

Use the number of strands of wool or floss which will completely cover your canvas or cloth threads. The number will vary according to the brand you use. Experiment on a corner of your cloth or canvas, outside the circle.

Begin in the center of the circle. Work the straight, bright red stitches first, as diagrammed. Finish the diamond with straight, dark red stitches.

Turn your work a quarter turn to the right. Stitch another red diamond. Continue turning and stitching until you have a cross made of four red diamonds. They will all meet in the center hole where you started.

Work all diagonal, light green stitches next. Finish the star by filling in the dark green stitches.

You don't have to add glitter, but here's where it comes in if you want it. Stitch the gold embroidery thread over each of the eight center stitches. These are the inside points of your eight diamonds and will form a golden star. Then overstretch the outside stitch, which forms the point, on each of the eight diamonds. Don't pull these gold overstitches too tight. Let them lay on top of the wool or floss.

FINISH FILLING IN the background of the needlepoint circle. Use white yarn in the diagonal tent or basketweave stitch.

Now is the time to insert your star in its hoop. Work on a flat surface.

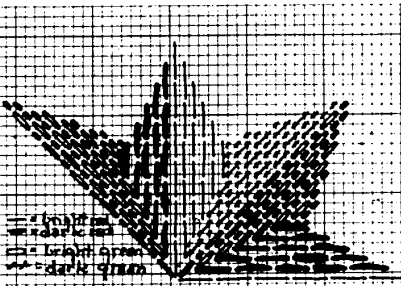
Spread just a little white glue on the outside edge of the smaller hoop. Place the star over this hoop and center it. Loosen the screw. Press the larger ring firmly down over the smaller ring.

Adjust the star so that it is perfectly centered. Pull it taut. Tighten the screw very firmly. Trim off excess cloth or canvas.

If your work is less than perfect on the back you may want to cover it. Give a circle of felt over the back of the hoop.

Hang by attaching a loop of yarn or gold thread to the hoop's screw.

This ornament will take only a few hours to finish and is a gift that's personal, pretty and practical. Give it to a friend or to yourself with love.



Better watch out for holiday dangers

The Cleveland area office of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is sounding this familiar holiday warning this year, but the message has nothing to do with being naughty or nice.

Instead, it has to do with electrical and fire hazards, broken ornaments, dangerous toys, flammable tree stands and unsecured fireplaces—hazards that could cause serious injury or death.

This may be the most important message consumers receive this holiday season. Roland W. Aley, office director, said, "It takes only a few moments to check for such hazards as frayed wiring on holiday lights, or sharp edges on toys, but it could mean the difference between a joyous or tragic holiday."

These are among the most common holiday hazards you'd better watch out for:

- Make sure none of the wiring on the decorative lighting is frayed or exposed. Test the lights and replace any burned out bulbs before putting them in same hand to reach spot on your tree. Always turn lights off before you leave the house or go to bed.
- If you have glass ornaments, make sure they're not cracked or broken. And if you have children or pets, put breakable decorations well out of reach.
- Make sure your tree stand is sturdy and big enough to handle your tree. If you have a real tree, make sure your stand is full of water—a dry tree is an extreme fire hazard.

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