



SECRET GARDENS WORKSHOP NOTES

Project 3

a shared vision 2025

SECRET GARDENS

WORKSHOP NOTES

CONTENTS

Page No

Introduction	4
Research	5
Group Project	6
Base Layer	8
Top Layer	8
Finishing	9
Individual Project	10
Timetable	12

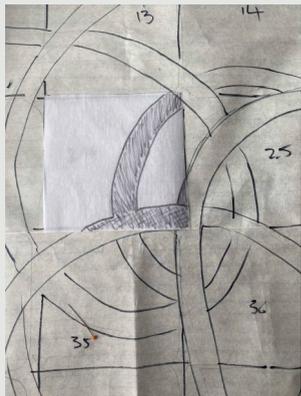
Secret Gardens:

Tiny boxes containing hidden gems of exquisite, miniature, stitched gardens for personal contemplation and meditation.



WORKSHOP VIDEO

You can find the video which accompanies this project on www.untangledthreads.co.uk The password to this section of the website is **thecollective** (in lowercase).



WORKSHOP KITS

For the **GROUP PROJECT**

Bondaweb with design
Woollen square
Base layer fabrics & yarn
Top layer fabrics & yarn



Please **DO NOT ADD** fabrics from your own stash!

For your own **PROJECT**

Square tin with lid
Sawdust-filled cushion
Inspiration pack of fibres, yarns and fabrics.
You can add any items from your own stash.



the
collective
UNTANGLED THREADS

INTRODUCTION



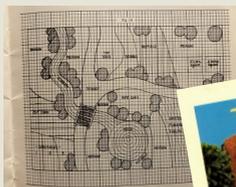
Walking, for me, has become an important part of mindfulness and meditation. The shapes, colours and patterns of both nature and cultivated gardens are things which have drawn my attention since childhood.

A couple of years ago (in Issue 2 of The Stitchbook magazine) we looked at a project which described 'taking a line for a walk'. The Secret Gardens project is an extension of that idea.



Taking a Line for a Walk (15cm x 20cm) Helen Birmingham, 2023

I don't have a garden of my own. I am lucky enough to live in an extraordinarily beautiful part of the country but, some days, when I don't feel like going outside, I use little textile compositions as a substitute for a 'walk'. Many years ago, I made a knitted farmyard following a pattern by Hannelore Wernhard. It has now, sadly, been lost in the history of time, children and dogs, but I still hold a cherished memory of walking around that wonderful woolly farmyard, talking to the chickens and sheep and most of all, crossing the knitted footbridge over the embroidered river and wondering where those paths would lead me ...



Search Press 1984
ISBN: 9780855325763

So, my idea for this project is that you create your own miniature stitched garden (or map/journey/walk) as an aid for personal contemplation and meditation.

In 2014 I created some work about Darwin's research on 'The Movement and Action of Worms'. The catalogue for the exhibition was a tiny box, measuring 4cm x 6cm x 2.5cm with separate cards for each piece of work. It was presented in a 'tin' which also contained a collection of associated ephemera. Whenever I look inside the tin, I am transported back, directly, to the thoughts, images and emotions which were in my mind at the time of making it.



Similarly with one of the pieces of work which I made when I was away from home, caring for my parents during their last few months in 2022. Although it isn't a piece of work I particularly like, it is now, almost ritually contained within a tin and has the power to take me right back if I choose to open it. (I can, of course, choose to leave the lid closed too!)



Once I had established that, for me, there is a really strong connection between emotion, memory, contemplation and meditation, (and of course remembering Paul Klee's quote about taking a line for a walk), the idea of creating a piece of work, which I could access easily and then use to focus my attention during my mindfulness practice was born. I particularly like the added 3D element of creating the work on a sawdust filled cushion, so being able to make the surface really textural and undulating, adding enormously to my enjoyment of taking a 'mindful walk' through the tin.



RESEARCH

I started off thinking that I liked the idea of creating a cultivated garden in my tin, (rather than a representation of a whole landscape), so I began by looking specifically at garden designs. I knew that I already had some affinity for Japanese Zen gardens, and the 'informal formality' which you can immerse yourself in, but actually I was really struck by the obsessively formal symmetrical designs of Knot Gardens, perfect, held almost at arms length, planted with precise evergreen hedging and designed to be viewed from an upstairs window. Something about the seemingly opposing psychologies, but surprisingly similar outcomes, struck me as very interesting. What do you think?



I have put together a Pinterest board called **Secret Gardens** which you might find interesting to look at, or it may just be that creating your section of the Group Project will be inspiring enough to get your imagination going.

As always, the Group Project is designed to 'hold your hand' while you gain confidence, and is aimed at 'showing you where you might look' for inspiration.

The individual project is yours to do with as you please! If you'd like to make a garden in a tin, go ahead, but play with the idea as much as you like ... I hope you will find the freedom to investigate what YOU see and feel when given the topic 'Secret Gardens' and how you might like to communicate that through your stitching.

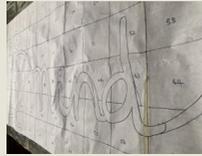
Of course you don't need to limit yourself to a particular size of tin/box and you don't need to mount your stitching onto the cushion.

I am aware that this new project may look ambitious, but from past experience, I really do believe that if we all work together, we can pull it off. (Deadline for your completed section is 22nd September 2025)

GROUP PROJECT

The group project is based on the idea of a Knot Garden which can be read as the 'MIND' logo when viewed from above (or hung vertically). Each member of The Collective is responsible for creating and returning one section of the finished piece. All 66 sections will be then be united and mounted, in the correct order, by me.

The section which you create will ultimately be pinned onto a sawdust filled cushion within a square tin, which will be located within a perimeter box frame to contain the final installation.

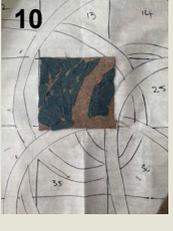
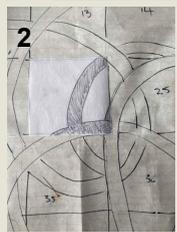
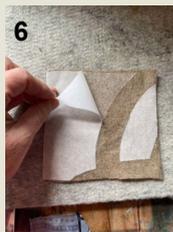


You have been allocated a **SPECIFIC** section of the design. Please only use the materials contained within the **GROUP PROJECT KIT**. You should follow the pattern piece which you have been allocated carefully. **The intention is that the MIND logo will appear from the negative space which remains AFTER your stitching is complete, and once all 66 sections have been reassembled..**

FUNDRAISING: I am hoping to display the MIND garden at The Knit & Stitch in Harrogate (November 2025) along with The Butterfly Effect Project together with the Wisteria wall hanging and a collection of our Amulets. The Butterfly & Flower Brooches which have been made, Simple Amulet Kits and Instructions for making a Meditation Garden Tin will all be available at K&S in exchange for donations to MIND.

You can find the video which accompanies this project on www.untangledthreads.co.uk
 The password to this section of the website is **thecollective** (in lowercase). In this example, I have used Section 24 of the design. YOU have been allocated your OWN SECTION, but the principal is the same in every case.

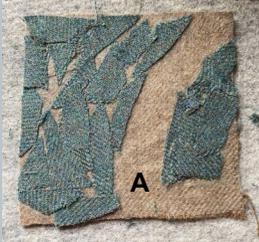
***If you have been allocated a section which does NOT have any marked lines, you should apply the whole piece of bondaweb and fill the whole square with 'vegetation' as per the instructions. Every section is VITAL to the completed design.**



1. The square of bondaweb in your kit relates to one particular section of the design.
2. The area which MUST remain undecorated is marked as a shaded area.*
3. You have a square of recycled blanket to which you will attach the bondaweb.
4. Cut the bondaweb along the lines and position ALL of the pieces onto the blanket to make sure that they are in the right place.
5. **REMOVE the shaded pieces.** Then iron the remaining bondaweb into place.
6. Remove the backing sheet.
7. You should be left with a 'gluey' surface, to which you will add fabric and stitching to represent 'vegetation'.
8. Cut some small, irregular pieces of fabric from your kit and place them randomly onto the 'gluey' bits. It's OK to leave a few gaps, but make sure that the added fabric is trimmed so as not to go over any of the edges.
9. *You can double check that you have left the right areas blank by temporarily placing the shaded pieces of bondaweb back onto your square. Don't forget to remove the shaded pieces again before you iron the fabric scraps into place.*
10. Embellish the 'vegetation areas'. **Your base layer of embellishment should be as per the instructions on the next page.** THEN add stitching, fabric, wool, etc. in any way you like, BUT PLEASE ONLY USE WHAT CAME IN YOUR KIT.

On the next page, and on the video, there are examples of some stitches and techniques which you may like to try in order to create the vegetation.

BASE LAYER



- A. Position small cut pieces of the woollen fabric onto the bondaweb, and iron them into place. Roughen the edges lightly with a wire brush.
- B. Pin small cut pieces of the green voile (heat distressed if you like) onto the woollen scraps.
- C. Use a very open and random fly stitch to attach the voile, using the 2-colour twisted wool. Add a few small pieces of the felt as you go. Remember, this is NOT the finished surface, so don't be precious with it. The main thing to remember is that, if your section has a blank area, leave it completely blank!

TOP LAYER



Please try to limit yourself to the threads, fabrics, wools etc which are in the kit, HOWEVER, you may find that you need to add some threads/wools from your stash. (eg if you are doing a lot of French knots or Bullion stitches.) If so, please select natural colours in shades of green or brown.

The Royal School of Needlework's online stitchbank is a wonderful resource. www.rsnstitchbank.org
Traditional stumpwork stitches are great, but you can make amazing effects just using bullion knots, french knots, running stitch, seeding, couching or just good old stab stitch through layers of wool fibres or felting!

The aim is to make your 'vegetation' sections as textured and exciting as possible, there are no more rules than that. Have a look at one of my original videos on Textural Stitching, or my Pinterest boards (Secret Gardens. Embroidered Felt, Couching) OR type TEXTILE MOSS TEXTURE into Pinterest and the amount of inspiration is almost overwhelming.

FINISHING

You *can* bind or neaten the edges (if you absolutely must, lol!) They will eventually be tucked and pinned underneath a sawdust filled cushion, so there really isn't any need .. but I do understand that some of you won't feel happy with a 'gloriously ragged and fraying edge'!!



NB: The sawdust-filled cushion and tin in your kit is for you to use with your individual meditation garden project. **DO NOT ATTACH YOUR GROUP SECTION TO THE CUSHION.** Just send the Group Project section back to me as a flat square with an embellished surface. I will mount and display the group sections at a later stage.



Do you remember when we made the tubes for the Entangled Bank part of The Butterfly Effect Project or the background to the Beetle Bugs?

The surface I am hoping for on your section of the group project is similar in style to these. The finished group piece will be displayed as part of the Butterfly Effect installation at Knit & Stitch in Harrogate. A design sheet for making a 'secret meditation garden' will be available in exchange for a donation to MIND, and your individual project pieces will be displayed alongside as inspiration.



SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR OWN PROJECT

You've been given the starting point of 'Secret Gardens' and you can obviously take this in any direction you'd like. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- You could simply make your own version of the group project section which you can then keep and use for your own meditation or mindfulness practice.
- You could look at a more detailed and 'realistic' interpretation of flora and fauna in undergrowth, using stitching and embellishment. Take another look at Salley Mavor's work Wee Folk Studio (www.weefolkstudio.com)
- What about looking at a modern interpretation of traditional stumpwork, raised embroidery or needlefelting.
- A really great starting point is to look at 3D textiles. Look again at heat-distressing fibres, tucks and pleats, gathering, coiling, wrapping, couching. A fabulous resource book is called 'three-dimensional embroidery' by Janet Edmonds. Batsford ISBN 9780713489651
- Another fabulous book is published by Thames & Hudson, called 'The Art of Embroidery' by Francoise Tellier-Loumagne ISBN 978055286395
- You will find an extraordinary number of books on Ornamental Herb Gardens, Kitchen Gardens, Knot Gardens and Parterres. Some of the design layouts in these books look as if they were just made for translating into stitched gardens.
- You may decide not to use the tin and cushion at all, or find your own. Rusty worn tins are wonderful., maybe in combination with rust dyed fabrics and yarns?
- What about taking inspiration from a map? Make a representation of an area which is local to you. Take a walk and 'map' your own progress.
- Collect some found objects and stitch those onto your work. I love to add sea-washed ceramic or glass, but it could be anything, twigs, stones, washers, litter ...
- Take a look at simple mazes, think about Theseus and the Labyrinth or tracing an escape route with thread, or bread like Hansel & Gretl..
- What about the amazing children's book and film 'The Secret Garden' by Frances Hodgson Burnett.
- 'My Secret Garden' could refer to women's sexual fantasies.
- Aerial photography is a wonderful resource for design .. and the list goes on and on .. I would say, try thinking outside the box, but this time, try thinking inside it instead!
- One of my favourite artists, as you already know, is Hundertwasser - you could take a look at some of his paintings and drawings for inspiration. I find the way he manipulates a spiral really inspiring and I can spend hours following one of his lines. In fact, he once covered a whole room with one meandering line.

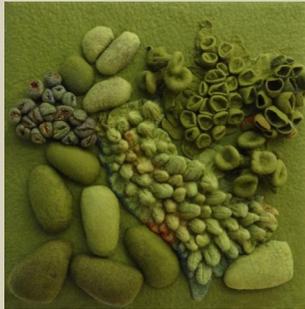


Tiny boxes containing hidden gems of exquisite, miniature, stitched gardens for personal contemplation and meditation.

All of the following images are taken from Pinterest.

It might be worth mentioning here that, although it's OK to use other artist's work as inspiration, you must remember that photographs from the internet shouldn't be published without permission. This leaflet is classified as 'for private use'. The photographs themselves are owned by the artist or photographer, and the design may also be covered by copyright.

Of course, you should never pass try to pass off someone else's work as your own, but none of the stitches or techniques are original to any particular artist ... its great to use images as resources, but make sure that you add your own interpretation, style, emotion, and soul ... don't just copy!



SECRET GARDENS TIMETABLE

7th July	Receive your workshop kit
22nd September	Deadline to send GROUP PROJECT section, individual project and words for SHOW & TELL exhibition and catalogue
20th November - 23rd November	Work exhibited as part of The Butterfly Effect Project at Knit & Stitch in Harrogate



Helen Birmingham
Untangled Threads
5 Belle Vue Parade
Scarborough
North Yorkshire
YO11 1SU

untangledthreads@aol.com
07968 194187

www.untangledthreads.co.uk