

# Fabrics 101: Embroidering on Outdoor Fabrics



Enjoy time on your patio, deck, or porch with fabulous projects made out of outdoor fabrics. Seat cushions, throw pillows, umbrellas, and grill covers are just a few of the many ways you can use the versatile fabric.

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## Project Needs & Notes:

- Outdoor fabric (like Sunbrella)
- Medium-weight (2.5 ounce) cutaway stabilizer

**This project was featured in the following:**  
[Garden Party Lookbook](#)



Outdoor fabrics are known for their durability and heavy weight. They're usually made of synthetic fibers, such as polyester or acrylic.

These types of fabrics are designed to be weather-resistant, staying bright in the sun, and repelling water when it rains. They come in a variety of colors and prints.

One brand name that you may be familiar with is Sunbrella.



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Embroider on the fabric with one piece of medium-weight (2.5 ounce) cutaway stabilizer that has been sprayed with temporary adhesive.



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Hoop the fabric and stabilizer together.

Outdoor fabrics are a little thicker than garments and indoor fabrics. Being a little more firm when hooping will help keep the outdoor fabric from moving while embroidering.





The [G3396, Suzani Chrysanthemum Medallion](#) design shown here has a high stitch count and a mixture of stitch types, and it performs very well on outdoor fabric.

A large variety of designs will work well, as outdoor fabrics can handle any complexity.

A sharp sewing needle, size 11 or 75/11, works the best when embroidering on outdoor fabric. A sewing needle has a smaller, finer point than an embroidery needle, making it perfect for penetrating the fibers in the outdoor fabric.



Here are the results with cutaway stabilizer. The stitches are crisp and clean, and the alignment is perfect.

There's no gapping or misalignment, and the edges are neat and crisp.

Here you see the same process with tear-away stabilizer instead of cutaway.

Note the small gaps in the ring of satin stitches. As the needle penetrates tear-away stabilizer, the stabilizer disintegrates, leaving nothing behind to support the fabric. That leads to shifting, gapping, and misalignment.

For best results, use cutaway



stabilizer.



When you browse through the outdoor fabric selection at your local fabric store, you'll likely find a variety of prints and patterns.

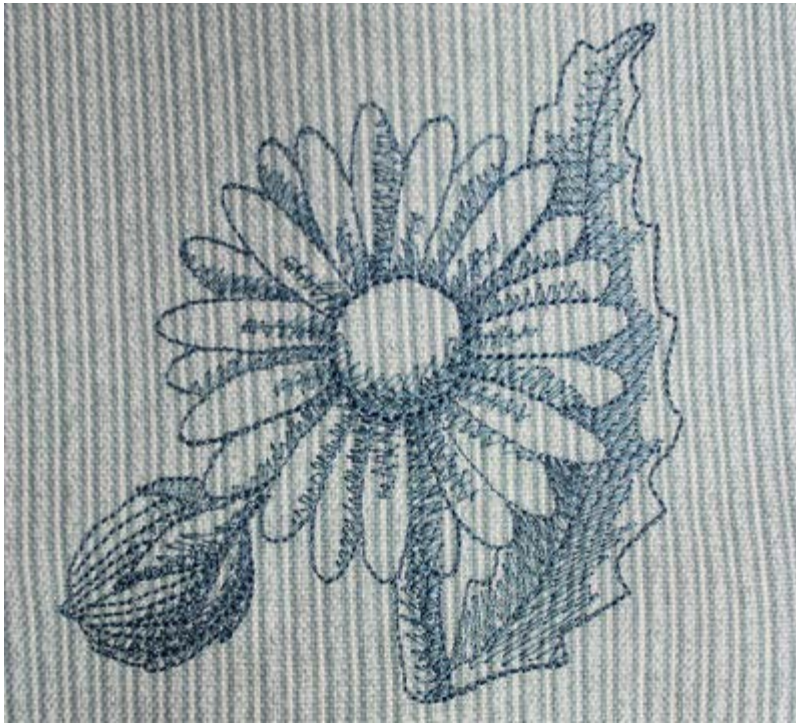
It can be tricky to add designs to these prints. Oftentimes it's best to accent an existing pattern with simple designs.

On the left is the [F4539, Mola Amaryllis](#) design, which is primarily composed of satin stitches. It's a subtle addition to the fabric.

This light and airy [A7311, Daisy \(Toile\)](#) design was stitched onto a striped fabric without a hitch. If you're covering a large area, like an umbrella or a grill cover, the one-color toile designs are fast and fun to repeat.

The smooth surface of the fabric allows lighter designs to stitch cleanly. And, the fabric's sturdiness holds up heavier designs as well.





You can use this type of fabric to make a pillow or cushion cover, too.

There are outdoor pillow forms available on the market that are laminated to protect the pillow from filling with moisture.



Picnics and BBQ grills come to mind when working with outdoor fabric.

Here we show the [G4553, Keeper of the Flame](#) design. It's stitched onto a patterned outdoor fabric, using one piece of cutaway stabilizer on the back for excellent results.

### Care suggestions for outdoor fabrics:

When purchasing fabric, check the bolt for cleaning instructions. Usually the instructions will recommend cleaning with a damp cloth. For stubborn stains: use mild soap and a soft brush. Wipe clean with a damp cloth and allow to air dry.

While the fabric is resistant to fading, the thread that you add is likely not. The designs will fade over time. You can try a weather guarding spray, such as Scotch Guard.

### Stitching tips for outdoor fabrics:

Needle	75/11 or size 11 sharp sewing needle. A sharp needle has a smaller, finer point than an embroidery needle, and works best to penetrate the heavier fabric fibers.
Stabilizer	A medium-weight cutaway stabilizer (2.5 ounces) is the best choice. Tear-away stabilizer can be used, but you may experience lesser quality results.
Design Choice	Designs of any complexity - from light to highly detailed - work well on outdoor fabrics.



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