



Swirling Branches TREE SKIRT

by RaNae Merrill

Editor's note: RaNae's innovative method of foundation piecing differs from traditional methods. Instead of numbering foundations in numerical sequence and adding patches in that order, RaNae's spiral foundations are pieced in alphabetical/numerical order rings. Read "Preparing the foundations" and "Foundation piecing the blocks" carefully to pick up tips for working on this project.

SWIRLING BRANCHES TREE SKIRT, 52" diameter, by RaNae Merrill

This project is based on my new book, *Magnificent Spiral Mandala Quilts*. You may recognize these spiral blocks as Twisted Log Cabins.

When you are working with spirals, strong contrast between the spokes of the spirals and the flow forms that result when they connect is essential for being able to see the design. Notice as you sew the individual blocks how placing dark values between light and medium values separates and defines

the forms. This is a great scrap project—be sure to sort them into lights, mediums and darks.

For more detailed information on making quilts, including foundation piecing, using templates, and cutting bias strips, see the AQS Quiltmaking Essentials & Tested Tips at www.AmericanQuilter.com.

Choosing fabrics

True red and true green, as they appear in the color spectrum, are the same value. When placed side by side in a quilt, they lump together visually, making

the design hard to see. For best results, always separate red and green with lighter color fabrics such as cream, gold, or lighter shades of green. Including two or more shades of red and green in your fabric choices will give your design depth and variety.

Preparing the foundations

There are two types of translucent foundation material: paper (vellum) and nonwoven interfacing. You can print on translucent paper using any printer or photocopier, but the paper must be

removed after sewing. Do not use vellum from the stationery store. It becomes brittle and rolls when ironed. Art store tracing paper is probably too delicate for this project. There are many translucent papers made just for foundation piecing.

You can also print on non-woven foundation sheets using an inkjet printer. I like EQ Printables Foundation Sheets. This material can be left in after sewing. Either paper or interfacing will work for this project.

The tree skirt is made up of 5 mirrored pairs of wedges containing 8 spirals. Foundation patterns are provided in the original orientation.

By tracing or using an accurate printer or copy machine, make 5 copies and 5 reverse copies of foundations for sections S through Z. To make the reverse foundations, copy or print the foundation on translucent material, then turn it over and mark "R" on the back. This becomes the right side of the reverse section.

Cutting for foundation piecing

Before cutting for foundation piecing, be sure to use the templates to cut the appropriate pieces (see Fabric & Cutting Requirements). Templates are reversed for use against the wrong side of the fabric. Then cut the foundation piecing center patches according to the information below. Instructions are for cutting oversized patches for ease of construction. These will be trimmed after foundation piecing.

FABRIC & CUTTING REQUIREMENTS

Skill level: Challenging

Quilt size: 52" diameter

- Requirements are based on 40" fabric width.
- Strips are cut selvage to selvage unless otherwise noted.
- See "Choosing fabrics" for tips on selecting fabrics for this project

Light green #1 – ½ yard

- foundation piecing

Light green #2 – ½ yard

- foundation piecing

Medium green #1 – ⅔ yard

- foundation piecing

Medium green #2 – ⅔ yard

- foundation piecing

Medium green #3 – ⅔ yard

- foundation piecing

Dark green #1 – ½ yard

- foundation piecing

Dark green #2 – ½ yard

- foundation piecing

Dark green #3 – ½ yard

- foundation piecing

Red #1 – ¼ yard

- foundation piecing

Red #2 – 1½ yards

- bias binding, 4 bias strips 3½" x 44" for 173" of continuous binding
- bias binding, 1 bias strip 2½" x 24"
- binding, 2 strips 2½" x 24"
- foundation piecing

Gold #1 – ¼ yard

- foundation piecing

Gold #2 – ¼ yard

- foundation piecing

Brown – scrap

- 5 F, 5 Fr

Cream – 3⅓ yards

- 5 E, 5 Er, 5 J, 5 Jr, 5 K, 5 Kr
- foundation piecing

Backing – 3½ yards

- 2 panels 31" x 60"

Batting

- 60" x 60"

SUPPLIES: Translucent foundation material (see "Preparing the foundations"), painter's masking tape, index or greeting card, highlighter pens in 2 or more colors, Add-A-Quarter™ ruler (optional), fusible web – 8" x 12", red ribbon – 3 yards

ROTARY CUTTING

E, F, J, and K are templates

A fabric kit is available for this pattern for \$99.50 plus shipping.

Visit www.RaNaeMerrillQuilts.com or call 212-316-2063 for more information.

From red print #1 cut:

30 squares $2\frac{1}{4}'' \times 2\frac{1}{4}''$ for centers for S, T, U, W, X and Y original sections.

10 squares $1\frac{1}{4}'' \times 1\frac{1}{4}''$ for centers for V and Z original sections.

From the gold print #1 cut:

30 squares $2\frac{1}{4}'' \times 2\frac{1}{4}''$ for centers for S, T, U, W, X and Y reverse sections.

10 squares $1\frac{1}{4}'' \times 1\frac{1}{4}''$ for centers for V and Z reverse sections.

The rest of the foundation pieces are cut (from precut strips) to the desired size as you work. To get started from each green print cut 2 strips $1\frac{1}{4}''$ wide from selvage to selvage. From the cream print cut 6 strips $1\frac{1}{4}''$ wide from selvage to selvage. Cut additional strips as needed.

Foundation piecing the blocks

First set the center patch. To do this, put a rolled piece of painter's tape at the foundation's center. Don't use double-sided tape—it's easy to forget and difficult to remove. Position the center fabric piece right-side up over the center area (photo 1). **Editor's Note:** RaNae's photos are from a different project.



Photo 1

Now do what I call a "next step trim" to trim the pieces on the foundation to shape and set up the correct seam allowance for the next ring of triangles. To do this, first highlight the seam line you're going to sew for the next ring of triangles (photo 2). Place a card along a highlighted line. Fold the foundation back over it. The fabric should extend beyond the folded edge. Trim the excess fabric to $\frac{1}{4}''$ from the paper fold. I like to use an Add-a-Quarter ruler for this step (photo 3).



Photo 2



Photo 3

The rest of the section is foundation pieced in rings. All the pieces in a ring are marked with the same letter. The first ring is marked 'A'. From the appropriate fabric strip (see foundation) cut a piece for a triangle in the ring, $\frac{1}{2}''$ longer than the foundation triangle. Position the piece against the center piece, right-sides together

and with the long edge of the piece aligned to the center piece edge. Double check the foundation markings for correct color placement. Tape the fabric strip into position with painter's tape (photo 4). Stitch and press as normal for foundation piecing.

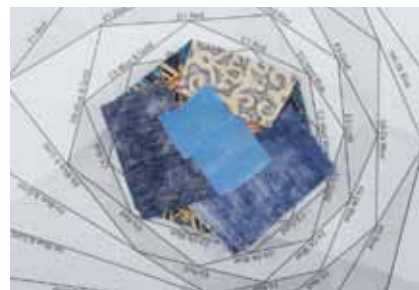


Photo 4

After adding all triangles for the ring, do another next step trim (using a different color highlighter) and piece the next ring. Continue in the same manner for all rings. Be sure to complete all the pieces in an alphabetically marked ring before moving on to the next.

Piece 5 original and 5 reverse of each section S through Z. When the sections are complete, trim excess fabric and foundation along the outer line

Assembling the trees

Following figure 1, join patches E and F. Press seam allowances toward F. Join this E/F unit, and sections S, T, U, and V in a vertical row. Press seam allowances toward V. Join patch K, sections W, X, Y and Z, and patch J in a vertical row. Press seam allowances toward K. Join 2 vertical rows (fig. 2). Press seam allowances open. Make 5.

Repeat using the reversed units and sections. Join the tree halves



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

and press seam allowances open (fig. 3).

Join tree wedges into full circle (fig. 4).

Leave the last seam between wedges unsewn to provide an opening. If desired, remove the section foundations.

If you are leaving the foundation in your project, remove the painter's tape from the center patches.

To do this, tear or clip the center of the foundation to reach the tape.

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Quilting and finishing

Layer the backing, batting, and quilt top. Baste the layers together. Stitch in the ditch to emphasize the shapes of the trees. Trim the batting and backing 1" beyond the outside edge of the tree skirt top.

From the red ribbon, cut 6 strips 12" long. To finish one end, turn under the raw edge and stitch to secure. Place the other raw edge even with the red "candy" sections on each side of unsewn wedge seam (fig. 5). Tack into place close to the raw edge. Repeat for all ties.

Use a 2½" x 24" strip to finish each unsewn wedge edge with double-fold binding. Be careful to catch the tacked ends of the ties in the binding.

Trim the binding even with the inner and outer curved edges.

Allowing the binding ends to extend 12" beyond the edge, use the 2½" x 42" bias strip to bind the inner curved edge with double-fold binding. Leave the 12" for ties.

Sew the 3½" bias strips together to make 173" of continuous bias binding. Fold in half along the long edge with wrong sides together. Press. On the wrong side of the tree skirt, align the binding raw edge with the raw edge of tree skirt. Stitch using a ¼" seam allowance, gently stretching the binding as you go. Turn the binding to the right side of tree skirt. Ease in fullness as necessary and pin to secure. Stitch the folded edge in place either by hand or by machine, using a decorative stitch.

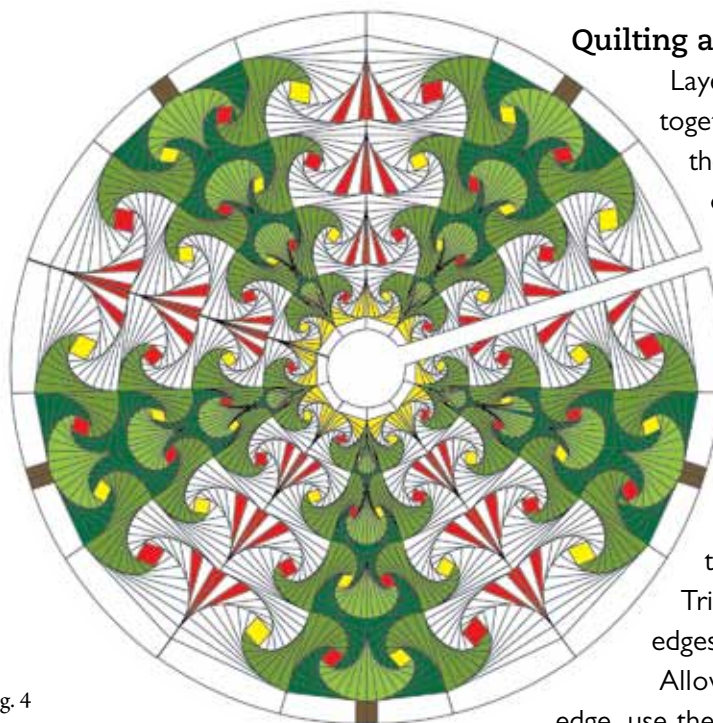
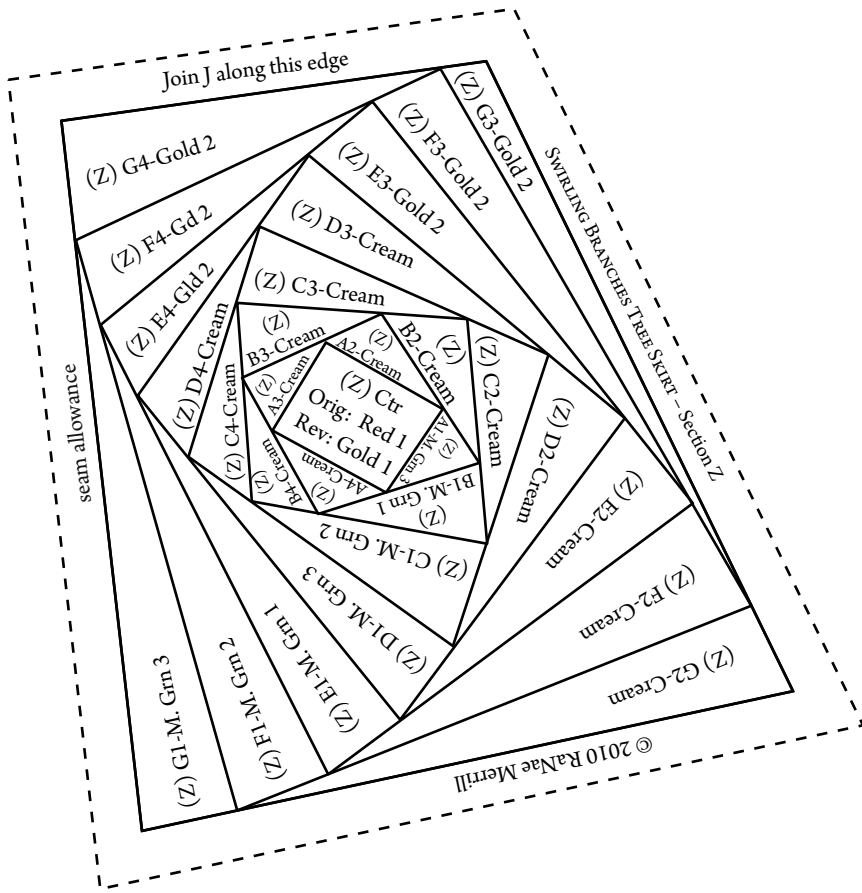


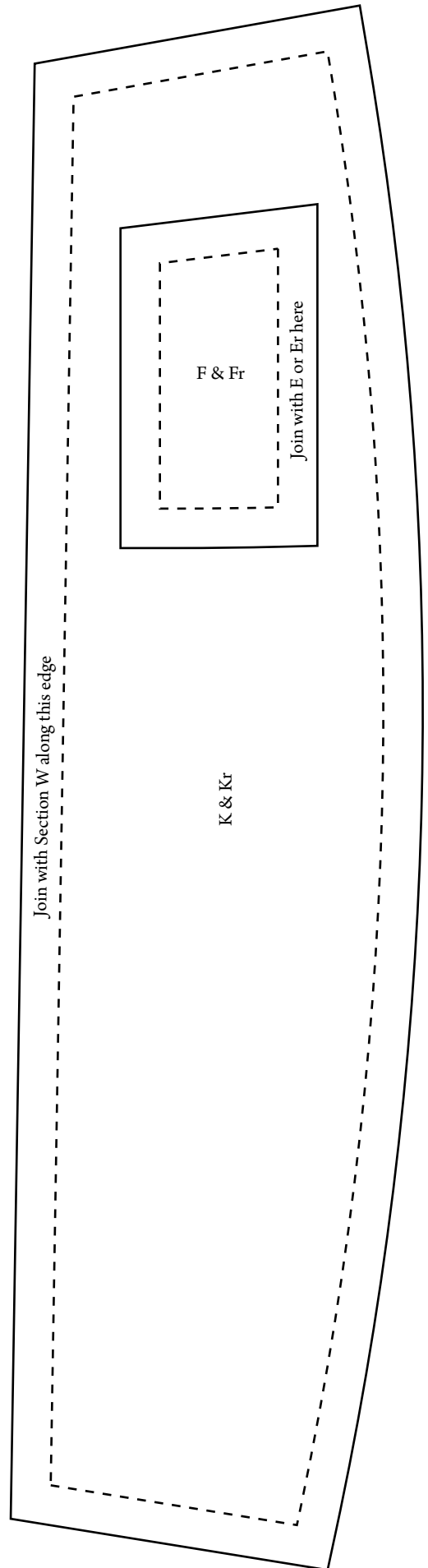
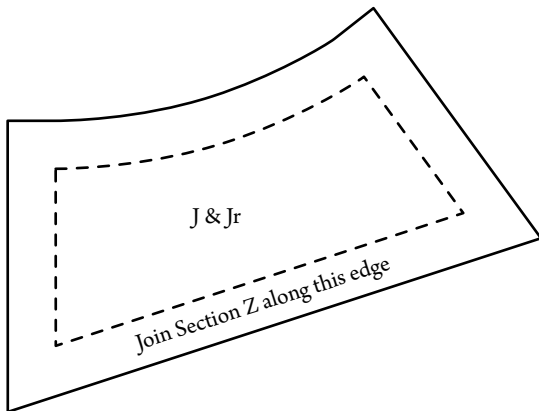
Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Templates are reversed for use against the wrong side of the fabric.



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SWIRLING BRANCHES TREE SKIRT - Section W

