

Starry Forest Christmas Tree Skirt

Tutorial for Sew Mama Sew

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This is the Starry Forest Christmas tree skirt. The front is a combination of mod tree blocks and extended maverick stars. The tree skirt is quilted and bound to give it texture and structure when it wraps your Christmas tree.



Front



Optional Back

I chose white essex linen/cotton blend for the background, a fun Michael Miller holiday print and several of the red/green prints from Monaluna's line MinGle for the stars, trees, binding and back of the tree skirt.

Materials:

background – 1 yard
5 red/green prints for trees/stars - 1 total yard
print for backing/center front square - 2¼ yds (use this for stars and trees too)

binding – 1/2 yard
batting 50" x 50" piece
basting pins
coordinating thread for piecing and quilting

Fire up your sewing machine, get your cutting mat and rotary cutter and you're ready to begin. *Be sure to use a **scant** ¼" seam (just a smidge less than ¼) for piecing.* Let's start with the top. The top consists of nine 15.5" square blocks. They include, 3 mod tree blocks, 4 extended maverick star blocks, 1 center square, and 1 background square.

Cut the following

Print (choose one to feature)
(1) 15.5" x 15.5"

Background

(1) 15.5" x 15.5"
Set these squares aside for now.

Section 1 – The Mod Trees

Now it's time for the mod trees. I chose to make monochromatic trees and to use a combination of two prints in each tree, one print for the trunk and another for the branches. I chose to do two red trees and one green tree. Cut the following for **each** tree. Remember, you are making three tree blocks.

Cut for each tree

Print #1 (trunk)

(1) 1.5" x 15.5"

Print #2 (branches)

(2) 1.5" x 1.5"

(2) 1.5" x 2"

(2) 1.5" x 3"

(2) 2" x 4"

(2) 2" x 5"

Background

(4) 1.5" x 7.5"

(2) 1.5" x 6.5"

(2) 1.5" x 6"

(2) 1.5" x 5"

(6) 2" x 7.5"

(2) 2" x 4"

(2) 2" x 3"

(2) 3" x 7.5"



Layout your tree. Start with the trunk, then place the branches from smallest to largest starting at the top.



1.5 x 7.5

1.5 x 6.5

1.5 x 7.5

1.5 x 6

2 x 7.5

1.5 x 5

2 x 7.5

2 x 4

2 x 7.5

2 x 3

3 x 7.5

Fill in with the background strips in the order listed from top to bottom. This will establish your sewing order so place accurately.

Now it's time to sew.



Flip the branches onto their corresponding background pieces, lining up the edges



Stack your pairs in order for sewing



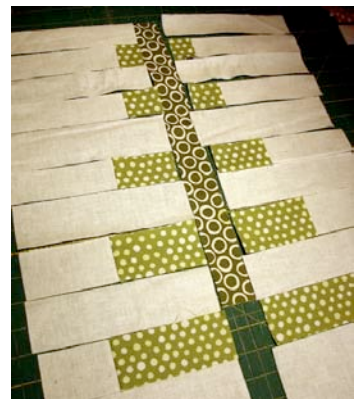
Chain stitch your stacked pairs using a **scant** $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam



Press seams toward the printed fabric.



Place your sewn sections back in the correct order.

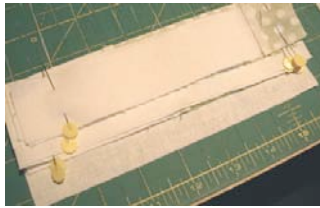


Repeat the process for the other side of the tree.

The next step is to sew the branches to the background fabric.



Flip the branches down onto the background strip below as shown.



Pin and stack the pairs so that you can chain stitch again.



Press the seams toward the background strip.



Starting at the top, pair the six sections, pin and continue to chain sew to create the side of the tree. Again press seams down.



Continue pairing sections, pinning, sewing, and pressing to complete the branches. Repeat for the other side of the tree.



To join the branches to the trunk, lay the trunk on the branch section, right sides together and pin. Sew and press toward the trunk.



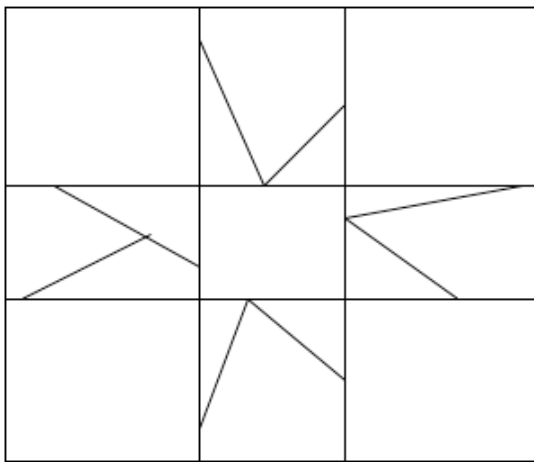
Place the two final sections right sides together and sew to complete the mod tree. Press towards the trunk.



This is the completed mod tree block. it measures 15.5" square. You will need to make 3 of these blocks for the top of the tree skirt.

Section 3: Extended Maverick Stars

Many of you are familiar with Gwen Marston's maverick stars in her book "Liberated Quilting." This is an adaptation of Gwen's stars. I wanted these stars to twinkle a bit more or in other words, have longer points. This also gives you the ability to vary the size of the star points from short and stumpy to long and skinny. The stars are a nine-patch block using patches three different sizes.



The extended maverick stars are 15.5" square blocks. You will need 4 stars for the top of the tree skirt. Cut the following for your stars:

From various prints

(4) 4.5" x 4.5" (centers)

(16) 4.5" x 6" (these will be the star points)

From background fabric

(16) 4.5 x 6" (these are the background for the points)

(16) 6" x 6"

Let's start by making the star points.

Take one 4.5 x 6 background rectangle and one 4.5 x 6 print rectangle.



Lay the print rectangle right side down at an angle on the background square. Look carefully at the picture above. The triangle of background fabric that is revealed is going to be the approximate shape of the star point. Changing the angle will help vary the wonkiness of the star. (Make sure that when the printed fabric is flipped over the seam line, that it extends past the edges of the background square.)



Sew along the edge of the printed fabric using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance.



This is how it looks after it is sewn.



Flip the printed fabric back over the seam and finger press.



Turn the whole piece over and use the edges of the background square to trim off the excess printed fabric. Trim the side and bottom. When you turn it back over it should look like the next picture.



****Be sure to save the excess trimming. You'll use that for another star point.**



The last step is to trim off the background fabric under the printed triangle. Flip the star point back, line up your ruler with the edge of the print and trim.



Flip the star point back down and press. Your first point is complete. You'll repeat the process on the opposite side to make the other point.



To make the next star point lay another printed rectangle at an angle right side down. You can overlap the other star point at the base. Notice that the angle is different which creates a different size and shape for the point. Repeat the process above to sew, trim, and press.



Remember the leftover from the first star point? Be sure to use those to make additional points. Each 4.5 x 6 rectangle should make 2 star points. Make 4 sets of star points for each star or 16 sets total.



Here is a completed set of points ready to be part of a star.



It's time to put the star together. Layout your star pieces like this.



Pin and sew star points to both sides of the center square using a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam. Press toward the center square.

Pin and sew 6 x 6 background squares to each side of the two remaining star point sets. Press toward the background squares.



Pin the top section to the center section, lining up the edges, nesting the seams and sew. Press.

Then sew the bottom section to the center section. Press.



This is a completed extended version of the maverick star.

Make the 4 stars needed for the tree skirt. I tried to vary the prints in each star and the length and shape of the star points.

Continued in Part 2

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Part 2

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Section 3: Putting the top together

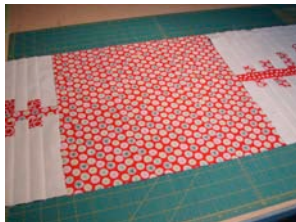
Lay out your nine blocks as in the picture below.



Row 1:
star, background
square, star

Row 2:
tree, print square, tree

Row 3:
star, tree, star



Pin and sew each row together as shown using a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam. Press top and bottom rows toward the stars and the center row toward the printed square.

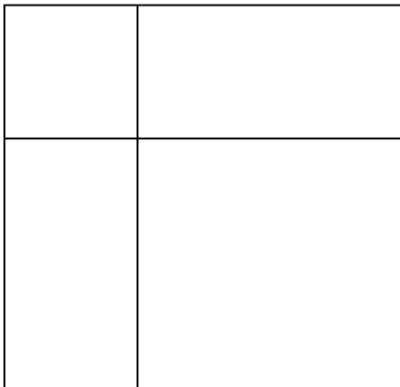
Pin and sew the top row to the center row and then pin and sew the bottom row to the center row. Make sure you line up the edges and nest the seams together.



The top of the tree skirt is complete. It should look like this and measure 45.5" square.

Section 4: Making the Back

The back of the tree skirt needs to be at least 2 inches larger on each side to allow for quilting, so the back should be approximately 50" square. Unless you use wide quilt backing you will need to piece your back. This is just one way that you could use to piece the back. You can choose to use all one fabric or use multiple fabrics for a whimsical look.



Cut

Printed fabric

- (1) 40" x 40"
- (2) 40" x 11"
- (1) 11" x 11"

Piece the 4 sections together according to the diagram using ½ inch seams. Press seams open.

The back is pieced this way so that there is no seam in the center since a slit will need to be cut to make the opening for the tree.

Another option is to make the tree skirt reversible with a pieced back. This is what I chose to do.



I used 4 wonky log cabin blocks made from scraps from the front, some printed panels, and a red border. The cutting/piecing instructions and diagram for this back are provided here in case you want to do this too.

Make

(4) 12.5" log cabin blocks with the outer logs in the background fabric (A)

Cut

Printed fabric

(1) 16" x 16" (B)

(4) 7" x 16" (C)

Background fabric

(4) 6 x 16" (D)

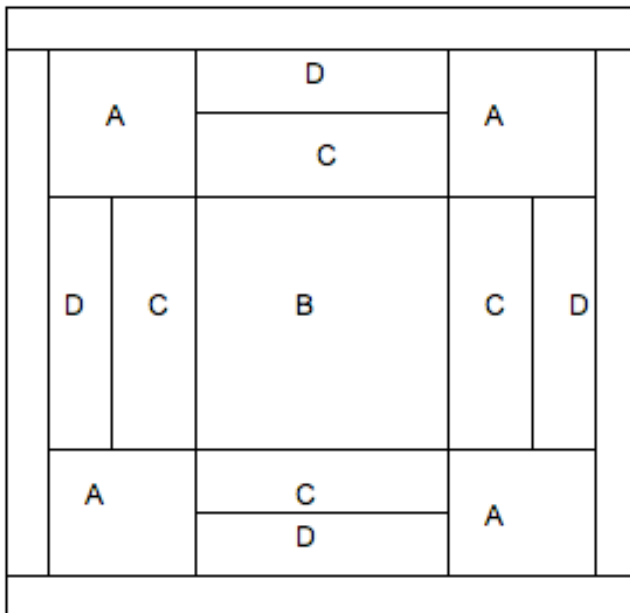
Border fabric

(2) 5.5 x 40"

(2) 5.5 x 50"

If you've never made wonky log cabin blocks, there is a tutorial on my blog, www.tallgrassprairiestudio.blogspot.com.

Use the information and diagram below to piece the back.



Use a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance.

Sew each pair of C and D pieces together.

Sew each row.

Then sew the top row to the middle row and the bottom row to the middle row.

Lastly, sew the borders to the sides and then to the bottom and top.

Make sure you press after sewing each seam.

Section 5: Quilting

Press both the front and the back to get ready for quilting. Be sure to trim any stray threads from the wrong side. Place the back right side down on a flat surface. Tape the edges of the backing down making sure the back is taut, but not stretched. Place the batting on top and make sure it's smooth with no wrinkles. Then place the top on the batting centering on the back.



Start at the center and pin the 3 layers approximately every 4 inches working your way to the edges.



I decided to quilt a diagonal grid every two inches. To do this, stretch a piece of painter's tape from corner to corner creating a straight diagonal line. (A partner makes this easier) Quilt your first line using the edge of the tape as a guide.

Reposition the tape on your sewing line and proceed across the quilt. Start again in the center and repeat the process for the other half. Then establish another diagonal the opposite direction and complete the grid. You will need to replace the tape every so often when it's no longer sticky enough to adhere to the fabric.

Trim the excess batting and backing even with the front.

Section 6: Finishing

Cutting the Slit and Opening



Lay the tree skirt right side up on a flat surface. Find a round object or cut a circle template about 5" in diameter. Center your circle on the center square and trace around it.



Use pins to mark the center of the circle and the center edge of the white background square. Connect these two points with a strip of tape. Cut along the tape to make a slit in the skirt.



Continue cutting out the outline of the circle so that you have the opening in the skirt for the tree.

Binding

Since the tree skirt is a square I chose to use straight of grain binding for the square and bias binding for the circular opening only.

Cut 2.25" strips, join them together to make approximately 240 inches of binding. Fold the binding strip in half wrong sides together and press.



Start sewing the binding on the top left side of the slit. Sew to the right side of the top ending at the top of the right side of the slit. Trim the binding even with the edge of the circle.



Turn to the wrong side, pin and hand sew to the back. Don't worry about the raw edges at the circle opening. These will be covered by the bias binding.

To finish the circle edge you will need bias binding. Cut 2" bias strips and piece together enough to make 56 inches. This bias binding will finish the circle and make a tie to close the tree skirt. If you have a binding tool you can use that to make your binding. I made my own.



To make the binding, fold the strip in half wrong sides together and press. Unfold the strip and press the top and bottom edge to the center. Be careful not to burn your fingers



Fold in about 1/2" and press to get a finished edge on the end. Fold the strip in half and press.



Pin the finished ends.



Layout the binding around the opening like this. Make sure the ties extend evenly on each side.



Pin the binding around the opening.



Start sewing at the end of the left tie. Sew close to the edge up the tie and continue into the opening sewing the binding around the circle.



Sew slowly around the opening watching out for those pins.



Continue around the circle and down the edge of the tie.



Your tree skirt is now finished. Enjoy!

The ends of the bias binding form ties that will close the back of the tree skirt.