

# Shadow Illusions

by Janet Pittman

**F**usible appliqué motifs cut from a slightly darker shade of the background fabric give the leaves in MAPLE SHADOWS the illusion of floating on air. By following the instructions provided here, you can create the same effect using the Autumn Maple leaf patterns on pages 4 and 5 or your own appliqué motifs.

## Supplies

Paper-backed fusible web

Non-stick pressing sheet

Tearaway stabilizer

Fabric (read "Selecting fabric")

Thread. I like rayon or polyester threads because they have a nice sheen and blend well with many shades of a color.

## Getting started

Before beginning a shadow illusion project, take a look at real shadows both indoors and outside. A shadow is a darkening of the background. For example, the shadow of a chair on a rug will have the texture of the rug in a darker shade. The shadow of a flower on the sidewalk will be a darkening of the cement but with the same texture. The shadow of a tree trunk



MAPLE SHADOWS, 19" x 38½", by Janet Pittman. Photos: Trish Eberlein.

on grass will be a darkening of the grass color while the texture remains the same.

A shadow is also affected by the intensity of the light creating the shadow, and the light's position in relation to the object. The sun is about the brightest light there is, and it usually creates very sharp shadows. But on an overcast day the shadows will be softer and lighter. And we all have seen the lengthening of our own shadow as the sun moves lower in the sky.

The shadow created by an interior light source will be affected by the intensity of the light, the distance from the object, and the angle of the light source to the surface—the closer and brighter the light, the sharper and darker the shadow. The length of the shadow gets longer as the angle of the light moves closer to the horizon.

### Selecting fabrics

Start a shadow project by selecting the background fabric and several shadow fabrics that are darker shades of this color with similar textures. Choose several fabrics for the main element in your design. If you like, you can work along with me on the Autumn Maple block from my MAPLE SHADOWS quilt.

Cut out 2" squares of the shadow fabrics and three of a leaf fabric. To test various aspects of the shadowing, lay the leaf fabric swatches on the background with a different shadow fabric under each. Start by offsetting a shadow piece  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to the left and  $\frac{1}{4}$ " below (photo 1). Notice how the lighter shadow makes the light source appear to be farther away and less intense.

Now use three swatches of one shadow fabric. Offset the shadows in order:  $\frac{1}{8}$ ",  $\frac{1}{4}$ ", and  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to the left and below the leaf fabrics. The motif will appear to rise off the background as the offsets become larger (photo 2). The offsets to the left and below the motif do not have to be equal in both directions. Try different combinations of offsets.

Choose the shadow fabric and the offset distance that you like best for your project. For the blocks in MAPLE SHADOWS, I chose a medium-value shadow and  $\frac{1}{4}$ " offset in both directions.

### Preparing the appliqué

Place a piece of fusible web paper-side up over the appliqué pattern. Trace each piece including pattern letters. Trace two of each, one for the leaf and one for its shadow. If multiple appliqué pieces will be cut from the same fabric, as for the shadow pieces, trace them next to each other, leaving an  $\frac{1}{8}$ " margin between pieces (photo 3). This minimizes fusible and fabric waste. For a softer appliqué, cut out the center of the fusible web leaving  $\frac{1}{4}$ " inside the traced line. This technique is called "windowing."

Following the manufacturer's directions, fuse to the wrong side of the fabrics (photo 4). Cut out the appliqué pieces on the traced lines (photo 5, page 4).

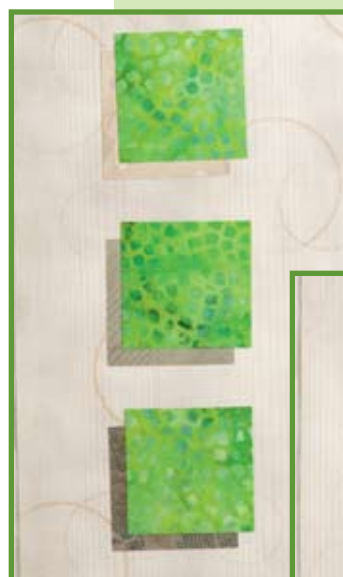


Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4





Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7

## Arranging the appliqué

Place the full-size appliqué placement diagram under a nonstick pressing sheet. If you are practicing with my Autumn Maple block, you must first enlarge the appliqué placement diagram 200%.

Remove the paper backing from the appliqué pieces. Arrange the leaf appliqué pieces from back to front on the nonstick pressing sheet. Fuse. Gently peel the unit off the sheet and set aside.

Arrange the shadow appliqué pieces, fuse, and remove from the pressing sheet. Place the fused shadow on the block background. Top with the colored leaf grouping so the shadow appliqué is offset as desired—my shadow lies  $\frac{1}{4}$ " down and  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to the left of the leaves (photo 6). Fuse in place. Using a fabric marking pen, draw the stem lines, stem shadows, and vein lines.

## Stitching the appliqué block

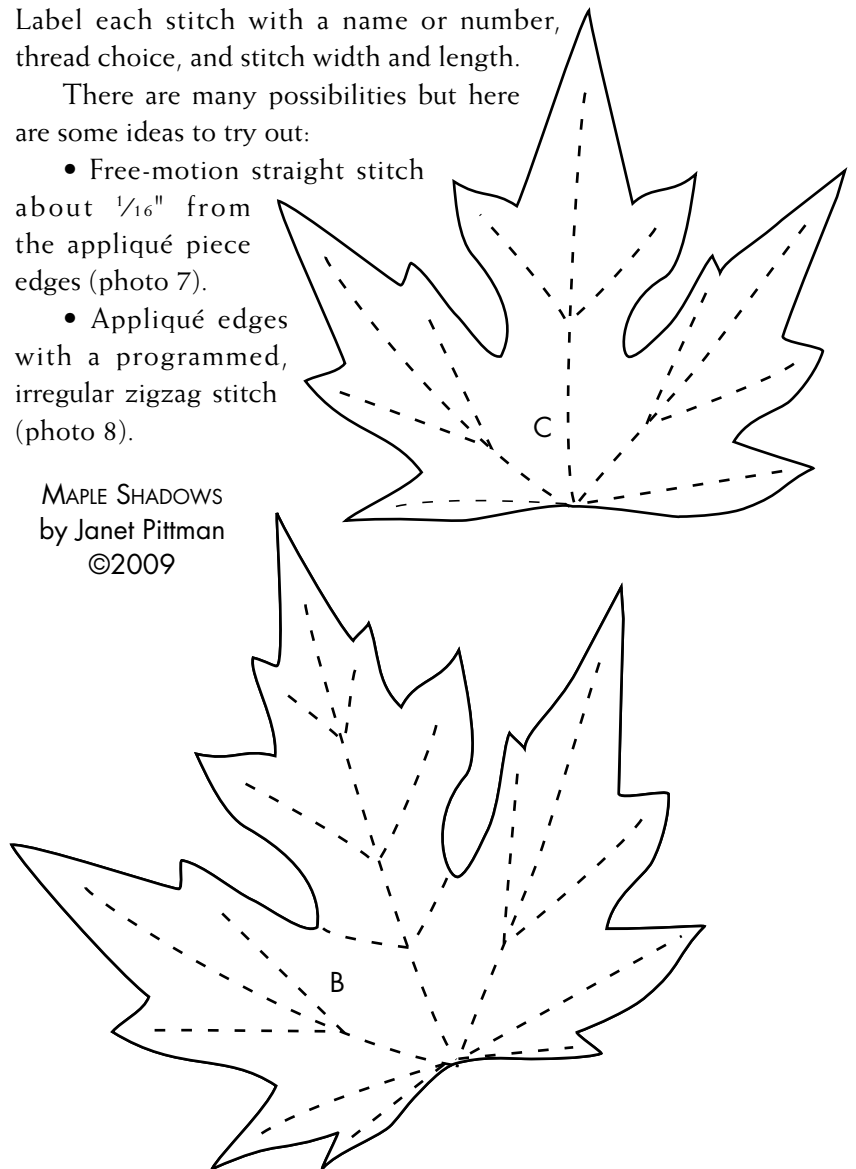
Before stitching on your block, make a sample piece to try out various stitches and threads. To do this, fuse a few strips of the appliqué fabrics to a piece of background fabric. Try varying the stitch length and width to see how the appearance changes. Label each stitch with a name or number, thread choice, and stitch width and length.

There are many possibilities but here are some ideas to try out:

- Free-motion straight stitch about  $\frac{1}{16}$ " from the appliqué piece edges (photo 7).

- Appliqué edges with a programmed, irregular zigzag stitch (photo 8).

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by Janet Pittman  
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- Stitch edges with a variable overlock or hem stitch (photo 9)

Choose the stitching you like best and appliqué the leaf. Do not stitch around the edges of the shadows, as they are treated as part of the background.

Free-motion stitch the vein lines. To do this, start at the bottom center of the leaf and stitch to the top and back down, adding side veins as you go.

Place a piece of stabilizer under the leaves before stitching the stems. Set up your machine for a 2mm-wide satin stitch. Using the same thread as the appliqué, start stitching at the leaf's edge. As you near the end of the stem, gradually widen the stitch. Stitch the last 1/8" at 3.5mm width.

The stem shadows are stitched in the same manner but with different color thread. For stitching the stem shadows that lie on the background, choose a thread that matches the shadow fabric. If the stem shadow lies on top of a leaf, use a thread in a darker value of the leaf color.

Carefully remove the stabilizer by gently tearing or cutting it away from the stitching.

### Quilting

With invisible thread free-motion quilt around the edges of the leaves and stems. Quilt the shadows as you would the background. ♦

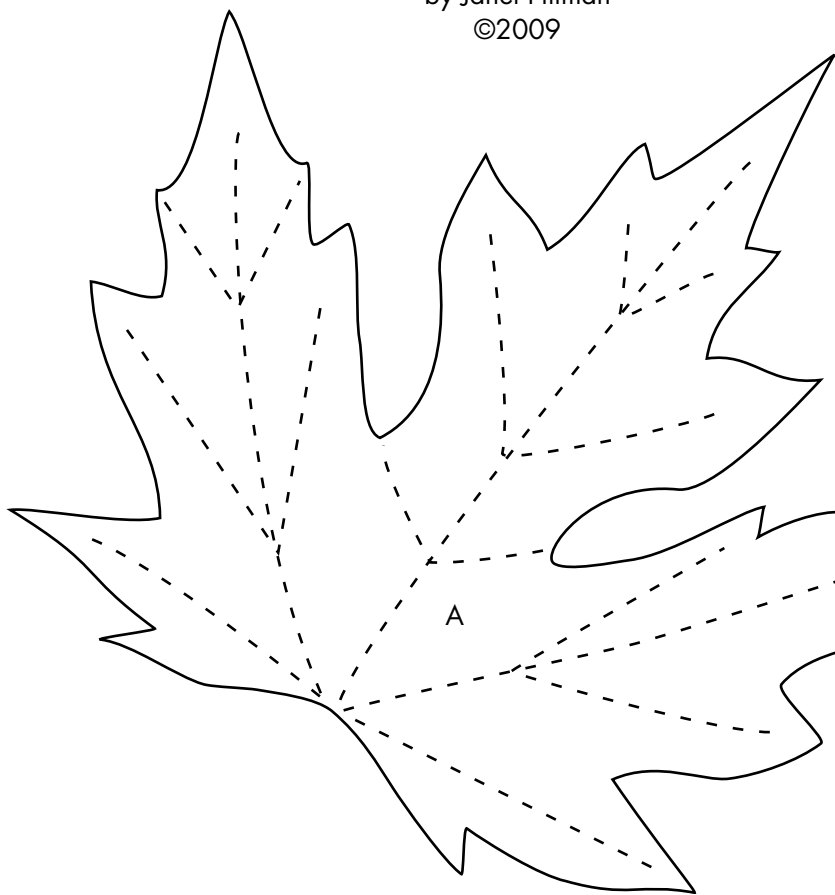


Photo 8

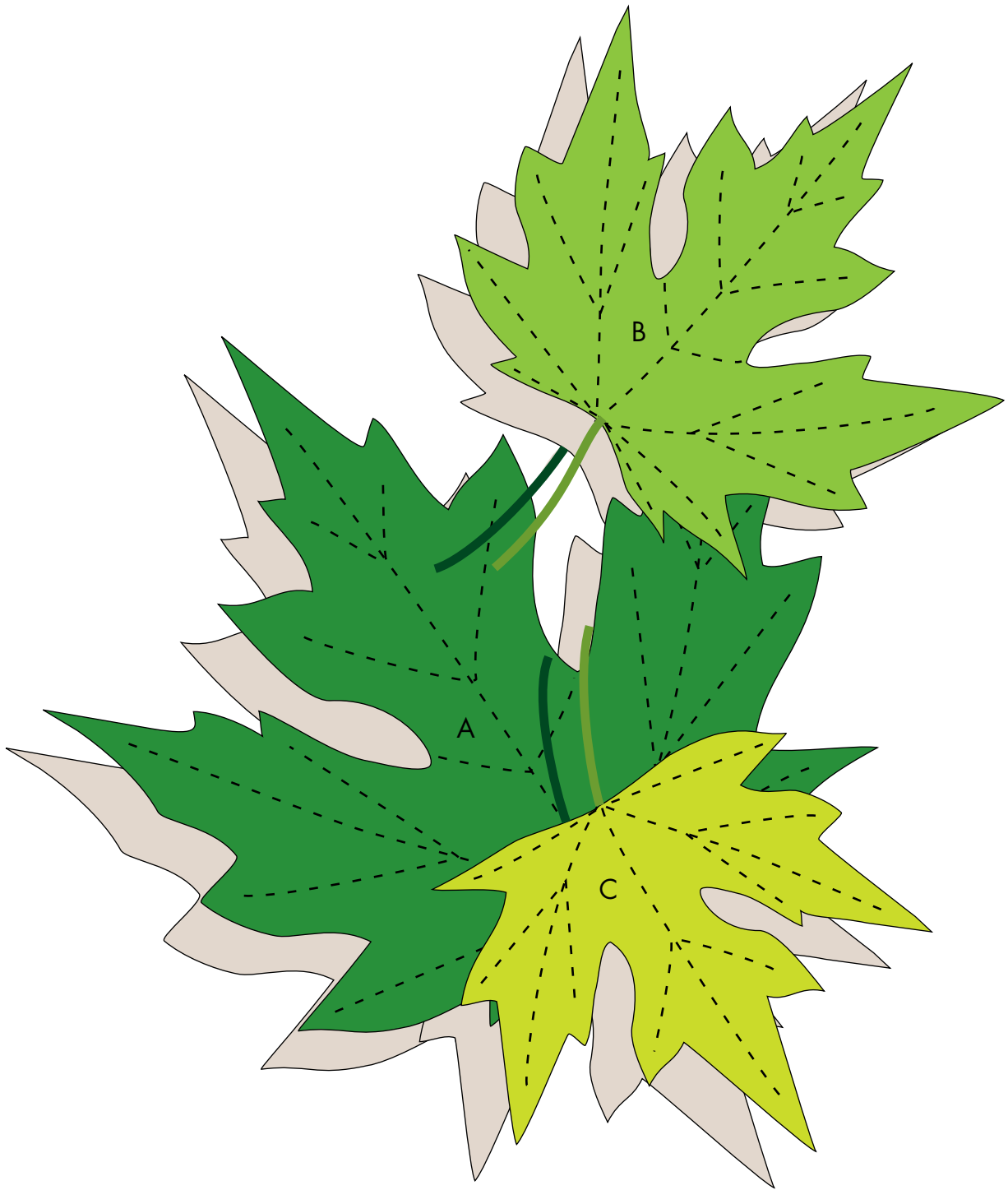


Photo 9

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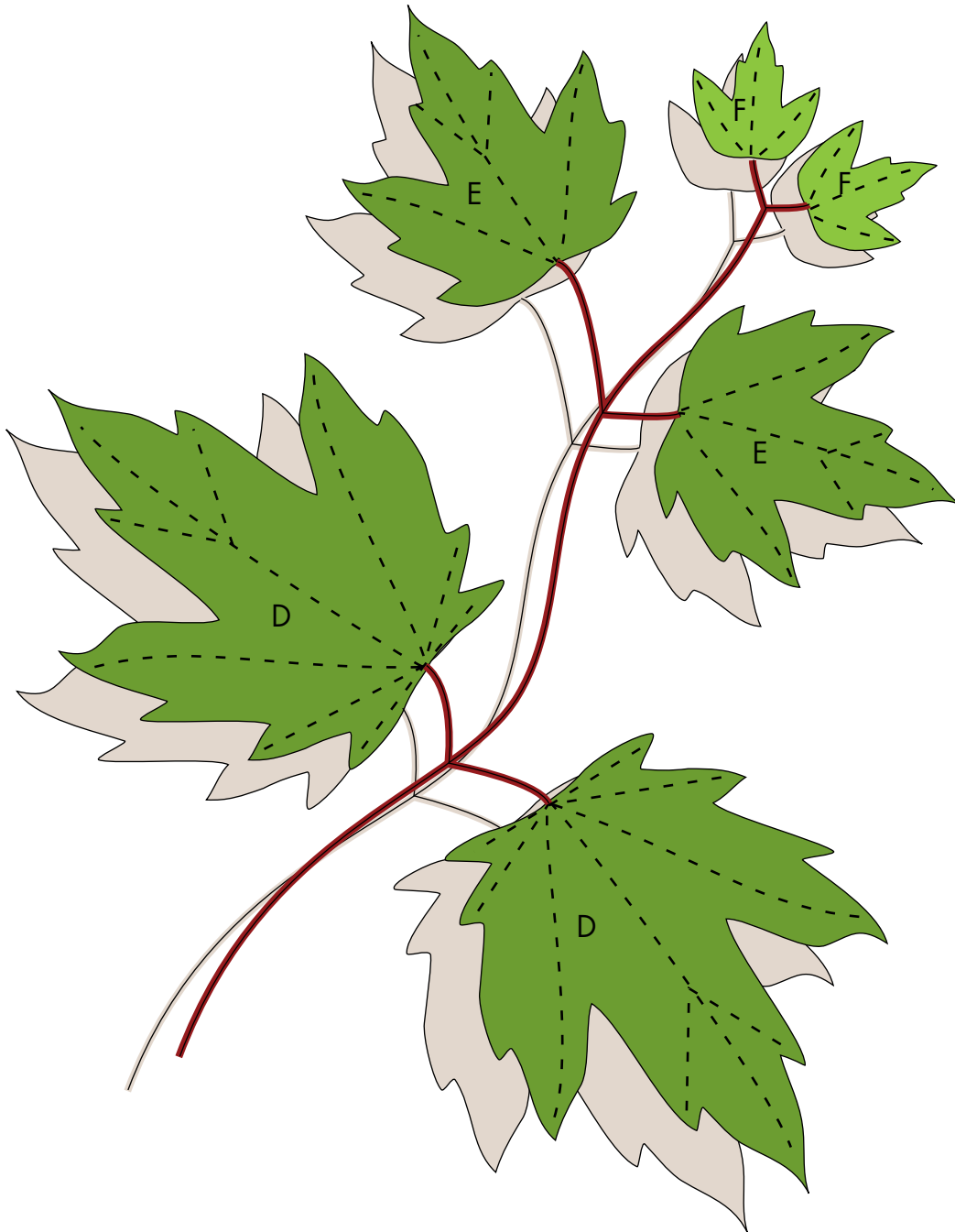
Appliqué placement. Enlarge 200%.



AUTUMN MAPLE appliqué placement



JAPANESE MAPLE appliqué placement



SILVER MAPLE appliqué placement

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