Sewing and Sustainability

Overview

This document was the basis for a presentation I gave at the December 2018 meeting of the Ottawa Garment Guild. The scheduled presenter was unavailable so I filled in with on short notice. My presentation and this document cover four main topics:

incorporating leftover fabric into garment sewing
where to donate leftover fabric
where to sell leftover fabric
resources to learn more about sewing and sustainability.

Kallie edited and pulled in portions of this lengthy document into a more concise version for the slide show presentation at the December meeting. I'm more comfortable writing documents than giving presentations, and since my involvement was last minute I didn't view Kallie's slides before my presentation. So I rambled a bit in the talk and got flustered but I hope everyone was inspired to be more sustainable and learn more on this topic.

Please let me know if you have any suggestions for this document and I will add any new and relevant information.

All links in this document are source references and are not affiliate links.

Thank you the Ottawa Garment Guild executives for giving me the opportunity to present at the December meeting.

Janeen Fiedelleck

How to use Fabric Leftovers in Garment Sewing

Large Fabric Pieces

Use larger fabric pieces in coordinating print or solids (i.e. colour blocking) in sewing patterns that may suggest just one type of fabric. This creates an interesting and unique garment.

Example: *Kimono style Jacket* ready to wear from the *Gap*: Four cotton print fabrics and solid denim fabric for collar, welt pocket edging, trim, and belt. I've include the price of this jacket, $138 CAD, to give an idea of the value fabric leftovers can have.

Example: *Fedora Dress & Alanna Dress* ready to wear by *Rixo*: Three silk Jacquard print fabrics in both dresses, with each fabric in a similar design but in a different colour (blue, red, black). £295 and £255 ($495 CAD and $428 CAD). These Rixo dresses and the Gap kimono jacket use of fabric is an esthetic choice that can give sewists inspiration for their fabric leftovers.

Small Fabric Pieces

Lining

Use small fabric pieces on the insides of shirt collars or cuffs, inside pants waist bands, lining part of a garment (i.e. inside the hood of a hoodie), pocket linings.

Example: *Light in the Dark Blouse* pattern with contrasting yellow fabric on the inside of collar and (rolled up) cuffs from the magazine *Stitch Fall 2014*

Example*: Ginger Jeans* sewalong part 3 with contrasting pocket and waistband linings, from *Closet Case Patterns*

Garment Details

Contrasting fabric for collar, shirt cuffs, button placket, patch pockets, trim on garment edges.

Example *The Rugby* pattern with white collar, cuffs and placket by *Merchant & Mills*

Example*: Silk and Linen Jacket* pattern with silk collar overlay, cuffs, waist ruffle and fabric flowers at sleeve centers - from the book *Sew Serendipity by Kay Whitt*

Appliqué

Appliqué can add interesting details to a garment. It can also extend the life of a garment if used to cover up a stain or a tear on kids clothes.

Example: *Foxy Lady* appliqué pattern from the magazine *Sew It All Volume 6*

Example: *Suede Appliqué* skirt pattern from the *magazine* *Stitch Spring 2011*

Reverse Appliqué & Negative Reverse Appliqué

Construction of these types of appliqué are as follows.

For **Reverse Appliqué**: instead of adding small pieces of fabric on top of the main fabric to be the appliqué design, you attach two same size pieces of fabric. Next you stencil the appliqué design on the outer piece of fabric and stitch around the stenciled design. Then within the stenciled decorative stitch design, you cut out the design on the outer top piece of fabric only. This leaves the underneath second piece of fabric to show through.

For **Negative Reverse Appliqué** the finished result looks like Appliqué but uses two same size pieces of fabric like Reverse Appliqué. The construction method is the same as Reverse Appliqué except you cut around the stenciled, stitched design instead of within the design. This method is used in complex designs instead of regular Appliqué so that you don't have to pin all the little appliqué pieces on top of your fabric.

Both Reverse Appliqué & Negative Reverse Appliqué generate fabric scraps instead of using them up, but if you do these types of Appliqué on just a portion of your garment, then your second piece of underneath fabric can be just a small piece. Also if you have fabric that you're not in love with, but looks nice paired with another fabric, than these Appliqué methods are good way to use up that less desirable fabric.

Example: *Anna's Garden Swing Skirt* kit in negative reverse appliqué by *Alabama Chanin.* The *Swing Skirt* pattern is also in the book *Alabama Studio Sewing Patterns by Natalie Chanin* or as an individual pattern from *Alabama Chanin* The *Anna's Garden* stencil is available as several types (original, appliqué, relief appliqué) from *Alabama Chanin.*

Childrens Clothes

Example: *Girl's Twirly Dress* pattern from the magazine *Stitch Spring 2013*
This dress pattern specifically uses multiple different fabrics, but you could also do the same thing in a pattern that just calls for a single fabric.

Pet Clothes

Example: *Dog Coat pattern 12-2017 #133* by *Burda Style*
*A*s long as you don't mind you and your dog going out for a walk in matching coats, then a dog coat is great for using up extra coat or raincoat fabric.

Accessories

Make neckties and bow ties, eye masks, hair bands and scrunchies, key tags from small pieces. Incorporate small fabric pieces into purse, pouch and tote exteriors or interior linings.

Example: Night time wear! Eye Mask ready to wear – title image from the *Italian-Canadian Shorts at the Italian Contemporary Film Festival*

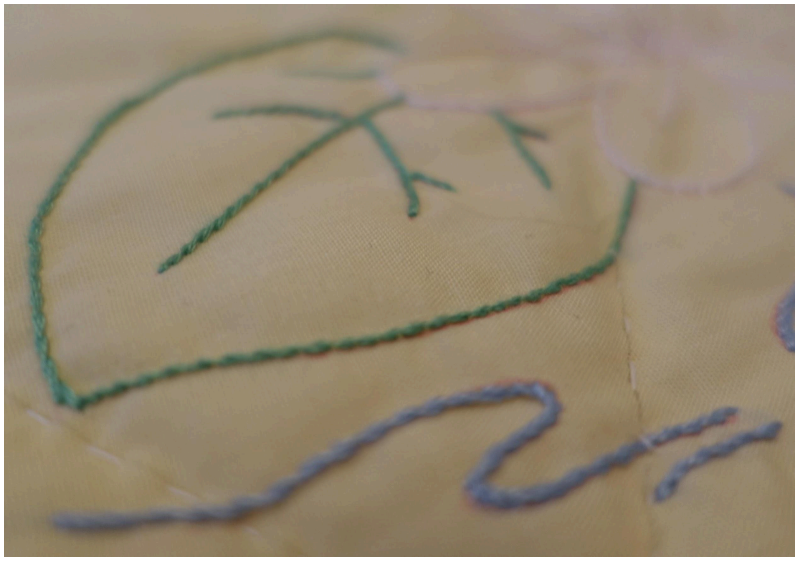
Example: *Unicorn Key Tag free pattern* by *Burda Style.* This isn't a garment but echos the #sewfrosting unicorn hoodie from the November meeting of the Ottawa Garment Guild. Also this pattern template could be enlarged into an appliqué for a garment.

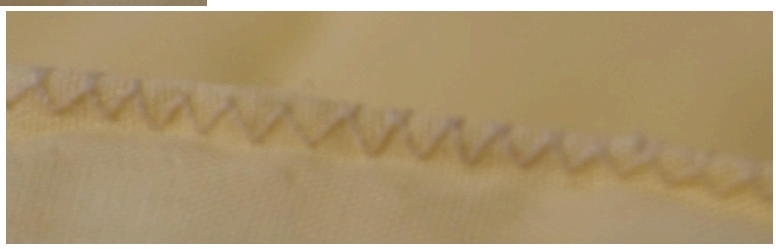
Practice Stitches

Use small fabric scraps for checking sewing machine stitch length and width, needle choice or thread type before starting sewing on garment.

If you want to use hand stitches or add embroidery to your garments, fabric scraps are good for practising on. Then your stitches will look as good as my Aunt's hand stitched appliqué, embroidery and quilting on the quilt photos below.

Images: My photos of the center of a Swan baby quilt with close ups on the appliqué, embroidery, edging of the quilt. All hand sewn by my Aunt.





Very Small Fabric Pieces

Bias Tape

Use very small fabric pieces to make Bias Tape that can be used for finishing raw seams on the inside of garments (Hong Kong or bound seams), trimming garment edges, making piping, camisole straps, and more.

Example: *Rosa* shirt pattern with black piping by *Tilly and the Buttons*

Example: *Basket Weave Inset* tutorial by *Colette*

Ruffles

Add ruffles to the edges of skirts or dresses or sleeves

Example *Frayed Tunic Dress* pattern with contrasting fabric ruffles at the sleeve edge, waist and hem, plus fabric flower corsage - from the book *Sew Serendipity by Kay Whitt*

Make an entire garment from very small fabric pieces!

Example: *Man's Smoking Jacket* (Catalogue No: HP-4286-7) made from silk cigar ribbons *by Rose Holmes* (ca 1910) from the *Celebrating Quilts Exhibit* 2009 at the *Glenbow Museum*, Calgary. Photos are from my visit to the exhibit.

Visit the Glenbow Museum's Collections page for more details on the *Man's Smoking Jacket*

MARGUERITE
Londres
VICTOR

MARTELLA

Where to Donate Fabric

Donation Guidelines

Boomerang Bags

Reusable shopping bags, made by volunteers and given out for free or for a small donation (to help cover costs) to reduce plastic bag use and their associated waste.
Image: examples of Boomerang Bags from the Ottawa chapter's website

Accepts donations of
- Fabric that is sturdy and **woven** (i.e. not stretchy) and machine washable, **size: fat quarter & larger**
- Sewing related supplies: rotary cutters, cutting mats, scissors, rulers, thread
- Sewing machines or sergers in working condition
- Volunteers with a variety of skills: sewing, crafting, woodworking, public relations, organizing and more.

Attend an event or make a bag on your own.

Where to donate:
email boomerangbagsottawa@gmail.com to arrange drop off or a pick up of donations or to volunteer

http://boomerangbagsottawa.wordpress.com/
https://www.facebook.com/groups/boomerangottawa/
https://www.instagram.com/boomerangbagsottawa/
https://kitchissippi.com/2018/09/04/amy-fraser-boomerang-bags-ottawa/
Bag Pattern: https://boomerangbagsottawa.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/bb-pattern.pdf

Kanata Quilt Guild

The Guild makes 24”x24" quilties that are donated to the Queensway Carleton Hospital special care nursery. The quilties are used by the hospital to drape over the incubators (to block out the bright ceiling lights for the babies but still allow the nurses enough light to work by). The quilties go home with each baby from the special care nursery.
http://www.kanataquiltguild.com/program/quilties/

They also donate larger quilts to other groups such as Ronald Macdonald House & Women's Shelters.

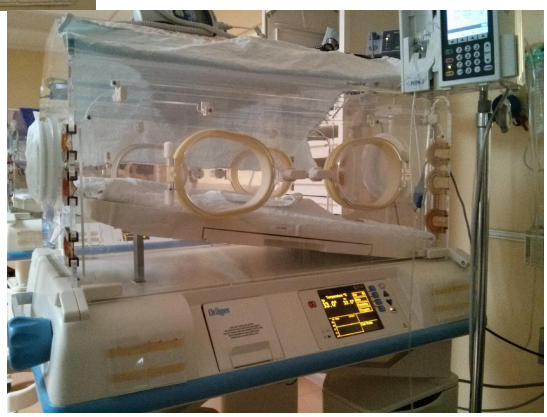
Accepts donations of

- Fabric must be **100% cotton (woven and flannel), should be baby appropriate, fun & cheerful,** however, **NO sparkles, glitter or invisible thread** as these pose risks to the babies
- Fabric **size: no minimum size** for donated fabric pieces (the quilters will join the pieces)
- also accept yarn, thread, books, rulers, cutters, etc.

Where to donate:

- Drop off donations at their guild meetings:
second Thursday of each month (except July and August) 9:30am - Noon
140 Abbyhill Drive, Kanata (Glen Cairn United Church)

Images: QCH incubator with hospital flannel draped over. My daughter's 20”x20” quiltie (from 2014). The largest fabric pieces in the quilt block are 5.5”x5.5”, the smallest pieces are 2.75”x1.25”. Photos are my own.



EcoEquitable

Sells donated fabric through its Boutique to fund their charity. Their endeavors include providing employment and skills training for new immigrant women and the under-employed, contract sewing services for small designers and businesses, the creation and sale of conference bags and promotional materials, assisting designers to develop their vision and translate it into full collections, **offering intermediate and advanced sewing workshops**.
Free Sewing Drop-In Fridays 9:30am – 1pm use of classroom, sewing machines, sergers, sewing tools. Volunteers available to provide sewing advice.

http://ecoequitable.ca/get-involved/donate-fabric/

Accepts donations of

- Fabrics of all kinds, **size: 1m or larger**
- Sewing related supplies: rotary cutters, cutting mats, scissors, quilting materials
- Home Decor accessories
- Sewing machines (domestic or industrial) in working condition

DOES NOT accept:
- Patterns that have been cut
- Clothing (new or used)
- Partially assembled projects
- Bedding, tablecloths, towels or curtains
- Scrap remnants (including upholstery samples)
- Embroidery, weaving, macrame materials and tools
- Craft materials (pipe cleaners, glue, construction paper)
- Sewing cabinets or other sewing furniture

Where to donate:

404 McArthur Ave (Heartwood House use Unitarian Fellowship Entrance) Ottawa. Mon - Fri 8:30am - 4pm
To donate a large quantity of fabric: email info@ecoequitable.ca or call 613-562-1739
To volunteer email chelsea@ecoequitable.ca
EcoEquitable is a registered charity and can offer tax receipts.
For donations with less than $1,000 value, please come with an estimate value of your donation.
For donations of over $1,000, the CRA requires the donation to come with an independent appraisal of the donation value (ie. receipts).
Please contact us at the time of donation to ensure that we get everything in order.
Charitable tax receipts will only be issued if the donation meets our requirements for usable textiles. All donations will be checked by staff before donation will be accepted.

How to buy fabric:

Recycled Fabric Boutique http://ecoequitable.ca/fabrics/fabric-boutique/
Fill a bag for $15, buy 3 bags and 4th is free.
check website,sign up to mailing list or check facebook for sale dates
https://www.facebook.com/EcoEquitable/
http://ecoequitable.ca/about/events/

The Original Fabric Flea Market

Annual event first Saturday after Thanksgiving Weekend in October
173 3rd Ave, Ottawa, ON K1S, Canada (Glebe Community Centre)
Admission $2
All proceeds support Cambridge Street Community Public School.
https://www.facebook.com/The-Fabric-Flea-Market-287556404606159/
thefabricfleamarket@gmail.com

Accepts donations of
- Saleable sewing related material: fabric, yarn, patterns, buttons, and other needlework supplies

Where to donate:
250 Cambridge Street North Ottawa (Cambridge Street Community Public School) Mon - Fri 8am – 4pm
Takes donations during the 5 weeks before that year's sale (i.e. 2018 donation dates are Sept 10 to Oct 11)

How to buy fabric:
Many vendors in addition to the School's table. Check the facebook page for details of that year's Market.

H&M Fabric Recycling

https://www2.hm.com/en_ca/women/shop-by-feature/16r-garment-collecting.html

Accepts donations of
- Drop your bag of unwanted garments at your local H&M store. All textiles are welcome – any brand, any condition – even odd socks, worn-out T-shirts and old sheets.
- Fabric scraps and thread are also accepted.
- The textiles are then sent to the nearest recycling plant, where they're sorted by hand.
- For every bag of textiles you drop off, you'll receive a discount card for discount card for $5 off a $30 purchase on your next in-store purchase.

Where to donate:
- H&M Locations
- (Ottawa) Bayshore Shopping Centre, Rideau Center, Place d'Orleans Shopping Centre,
- (Gatineau) Promenades de l'Outaouais

There was some discussion during the December meeting of the Ottawa Garment Guild if the H&M recycling was just "green washing" and a way to get people into their stores and buy new clothing with the discount card given in exchange for recycling. This CBC Marketplace news article covers this very topic and more:
"What really happens to old clothes dropped in those in-store recycling bins"

Local Theatre Companies

From the December 2018 meeting, there was the suggestion to donate fabric to local theatre companies who sew some of their own costumes. The companies that were mentioned: Orpheus Musical Theatre Society and The Savoy Society of Ottawa.

Fabric Donation Info Sheet

Attach one info sheet per fabric sample (can include multiple pieces of the same fabric on one sheet). Please provide details to those receiving your donation so they can make the best use of this fabric.

Fabric Type:

i.e. Woven, Knit/Jersey, Felt, Velvet, Fleece, etc.

Fabric Content

Provide as much detail as possible, best guess will do: i.e. 40% Linen & 60% Cotton, Wool blend, likely Rayon

Fabric Size(s) (Approximate)

i.e. Fat Quarter (18”x22”), 1m Length x 60 inches Width, or 25cm x 80cm
include separate sizes for multiple pieces of the same fabric

Where to Sell Destashed Fabric

Local, fabric specific marketplaces:

Hintonburg Fabric Flea Market

Annual event first Saturday in May
1064 Wellington Street West (Hintonburg Community Centre) Ottawa, ON K1Y 2Y3
Admission $2
Vendor tables available – check with Market for vendor prices
https://facebook.com/HFFM0505
fabricfleamarket@hotmail.com 613-729-8434

The Original Fabric Flea Market

Annual event first Saturday after Thanksgiving Weekend in October
173 3rd Ave, Ottawa, ON K1S, Canada (Glebe Community Centre)
Admission $2
All proceeds support Cambridge Street Community Public School.
Vendor tables available – check with Market for vendor prices
https://www.facebook.com/The-Fabric-Flea-Market-287556404606159/
thefabricfleamarket@gmail.com

Ottawa Fabric Destash – Facebook Group

https://www.facebook.com/groups/273401316132258/
Buy, Sell, and post "in search of" requests

Ottawa Area Sewing and Craft Supplies – Facebook Group

https://www.facebook.com/groups/421562371336794/
Buy and Sell sewing materials and craft supplies

Sew Ottawa! – Facebook Group

https://www.facebook.com/groups/568262013516372/
A group for Ottawa sewists that also allows destashing of fabric: **post a comment to the Destash Thread**.

Frade (The Fibre Trade) – online Marketplace

https://www.thefrade.com
An online marketplace for people world wide to buy, sell, trade, or give away their unwanted fabric, yarn, quilts and unfinished projects. Free and paid memberships. The Frade creators are from New Zealand, but the item posts are global. It's a new-ish marketplace so not a lot of Canadian content yet, but there maybe Ottawa posts in the future.

Sustainable Sewing & Fashion Discussions

Podcasts

Listen to and visit the podcast websites for ideas for what to do with fabric leftovers, fabric recycling, and fashion's environmental impact (the fashion industry is second largest polluter globally, second only to fossil fuels). Most of these podcasts are focused on fashion rather than sewing. However, fashion podcasts are still relevant to sewists. Fabric is part of the same supply chain for ready to wear garments. The environmental cost of fast fashion is a great incentive to sew one's own slow fashion. Most sewists aren't going to make everything in their wardrobe (shoes!) so knowing where to find sources of sustainable, ethically made fashion is useful.

Love to Sew

This sewing podcast has two informative episodes on sewing and sustainability.
http://lovetosewpodcast.com/episodes/episode-35-sustainability-and-sewing/
http://lovetosewpodcast.com/episodes/episode-42-community-sustainability/

Dressed: the History of Fashion

This podcast explores the history behind the clothes we wear. The hosts are (among other accomplishments), graduates of the Fashion Institute of Technology. Their August 28, 2018 episode is specifically about sustainability and fashion.
https://www.dressedpodcast.com/podcasts/fashion-and-sustainability-an-interview-with-tara-st-james.htm

Fashion Revolution

Pro-fashion protesters with a goal to create a more ethical and sustainable future for fashion.
Lots of resources, activities, events, and a 3 part podcast series “Who Made My Clothes”
Canadian chapter on social media: @fash_revcan
https://fashionrevolution.org
https://fashionrevolution/org/north-america/canada
There's more info about Fashion Revolution in Episode 37 of Wardrobe Crisis
https://www.clarepress.com/podcast/2018/4/14/episode-37-fashion-revolutions-head-of-policy-sarah-ditty

Fashion No Filter

episode Eco Warriors (Dec 16, 2017) discusses sustainability and fashion
no website, find on your favourite podcast app
https://www.instagram.com/fashionnofilter

American Fashion Podcast

A fashion industry podcast with several (4+) episodes related to sustainability.
https://americanfashionpodcast.com/episode-list/

Wardrobe Crisis

Host Clare Press is Vogue Australia's Sustainability Editor. All episodes are about sustainability, environmental issues and ethical fashion creation. The specific episodes I talked about are #48 on H&M's recycling program and #63 about the Christina Dean the Hong Kong based journalist who, for 365 days, only wore clothing she found at a recycling center.
https://www.clarepress.com/podcast/
https://www.clarepress.com/podcast/2018/7/13/podcast-ep-48-hms-head-of-sustainability-anna-gedda
https://www.clarepress.com/podcast/2018/11/19/podcast-ep-63-fighting-fashion-wasrte-redresss-christina-dean

Documentaries

The True Cost
https://truecostmovie.com