

Texture, Sparkle, Detail

Four simple
embellishments
that make any
garment special

BY ANNA MAZUR

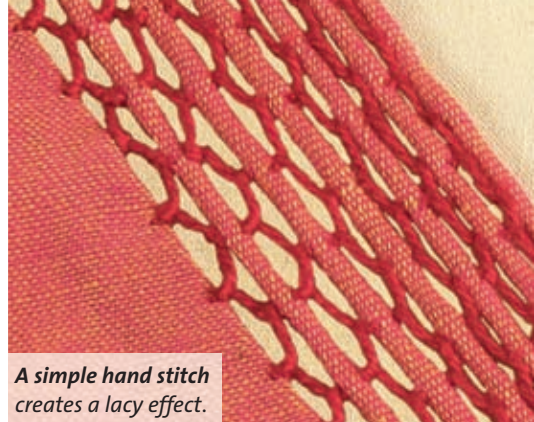
Summer is a time for paring down, shedding layers, and simplifying. But who says you have to forgo the kind of unique details that turn a basic garment into a head-turner? To create a wardrobe of easy-to-wear summer pieces that are anything but boring, add intricate-looking edge and surface embellishments. Start with well-fitting patterns and delicious, cool fabrics, and then indulge your craving for adornment. You'll have fun learning the techniques and love wearing the finished results.

Couture sewer Anna Mazur is a frequent contributor to Threads and Sew Stylish magazines.

Parallel rows of bias cord joined by fagoting stitches draw attention to the neckline of Marfy 9810.

Echo an edge with fagoted cording

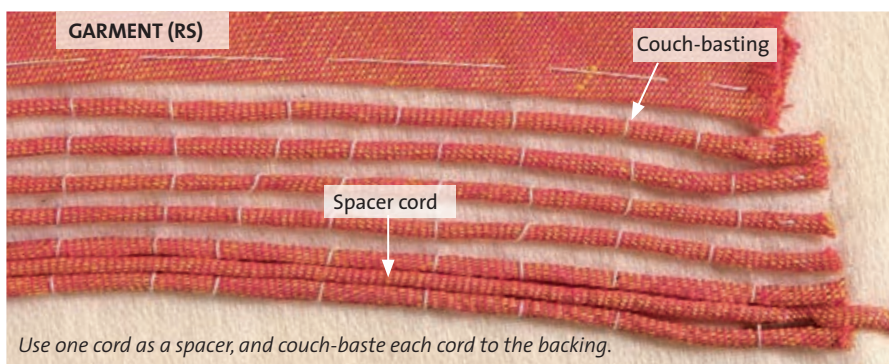
This elegant edging takes a little time to do but isn't hard to master. Narrow bias tubes are attached along a garment edge with delicate fagot or cretan stitches so they appear to float almost independently. Use heavy thread, pearl cotton, or embroidery floss or floche (a five-ply, non-separating, soft, twisted cotton embroidery thread) for fagot stitching.



1 Prepare the garment and cords. From $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-wide bias strips, create cords long enough to follow the garment's edge. Make as many as you plan to attach to the garment plus one for spacing. Then set the cords aside.

Finish the edge to be embellished with either a lining or a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-wide bias binding. It's best to use a very lightweight fabric such as silk gauze or chiffon for either one. Next, baste the garment edge to a backing of heavy, sew-in interfacing, such as Pellon 50 heavyweight. If the garment edge will drape over the body, e.g., around a neckline or over the shoulder, drape the stabilizer over a shaped surface such as a sleeve roll, sleeve board, or dress form.

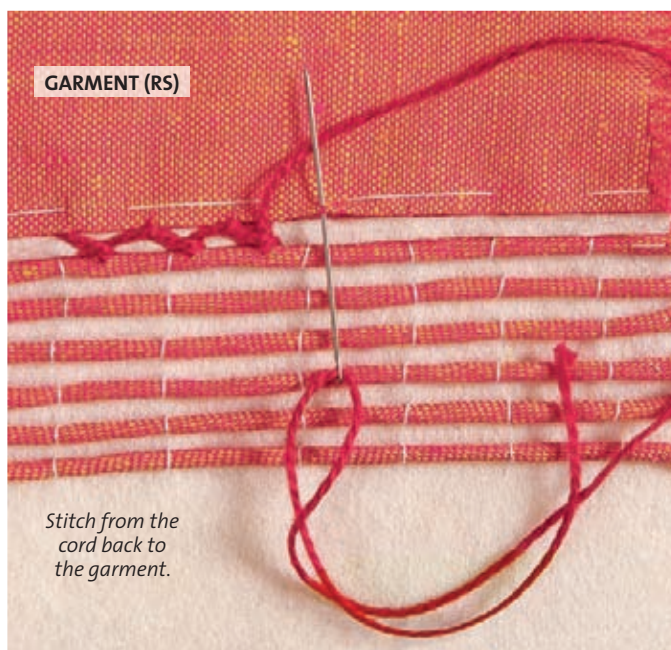
2 Baste the cords in place. Align one cord so it touches the garment edge; this is the spacer cord. Lay another cord along the spacer cord, and couch-baste it to the backing, i.e., sew stitches that cross over it but don't catch it. Don't catch the spacer cord in this stitching. Move the spacer cord to the outer edge of the couched cord, align a second cord along it, and couch-baste it as before. Repeat until you have secured the number of cords you want.



3 Begin the fagoting stitch. Thread a needle with a single strand of fagoting thread. Anchor the thread on the garment edge, and pull the needle out from the wrong side of the garment (A). Stitch from left to right. Extend the thread diagonally to the right, and take a stitch through the side of the cording. Bring the needle up from the underside (B), and cross the needle over the thread. This forms a twist at the base of the stitch, close to the cord. Gently pull the thread to tighten.



4 Complete the fagoting stitch. Extend the thread diagonally up to the garment edge, stitch from the wrong side, and form a twisted stitch, as described at left. Pull gently to tighten. Repeat the stitch around the garment edge to attach the entire cord. Then, join the remaining cords in the same way. To join the cord ends, insert one end inside the other, tucking the outer cord's raw edges in. Hand-sew around this join to secure it. Remove the couch-basting stitches and the foundation.



WHAT IS COUCH-BASTING?

"Couching" is a technique used to permanently attach cord or trim to the surface of a fabric by stitching over the cord instead of through it. "Couch-basting" is done the same way, but the attachment is intended to be temporary.

Glittering ladders of bugle and seed beads replace self-fabric straps, giving Marfy 2235 a bit of built-in jewelry.

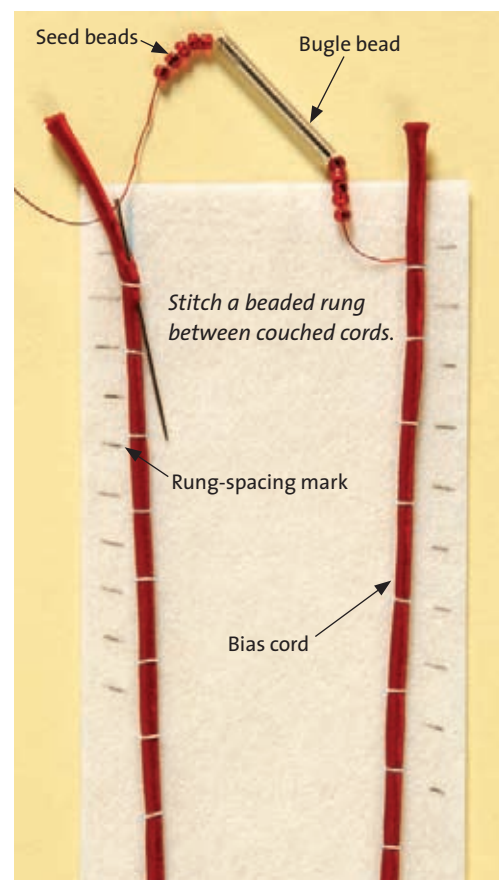


Fashion a fancy strap with bugle beads

Link two bias-tube cords with a ladder of bugle beads to create a beautiful, beaded strap, using a technique that's a variation on the fagoted edging shown on page 3. You can use any combination of beads you like, but bugle beads produce the most stable strap. Bugle beads have sharp ends; to prevent them from cutting the thread, bracket them with seed beads. Work with strong beading thread, such as Nymo, and a fine needle that can pass through the beads at least twice when threaded.

1 Anchor the bias cords. Mark the edges of the strap on a temporary backing of heavy interfacing, and couch-baste the cords in place along the marked lines. Mark the location of the rung ends on the backing, as a placement guide. In the sample shown, the rungs are slanted slightly to create the proper strap shape. Thread the needle with one strand of thread, knot it, and anchor it to one cord.

2 Attach the first “rung” of beads. With the needle, pick up one set of seed beads, one bugle bead, and a second set of seed beads. Then, take a stitch into the other cord at the marked location opposite the starting point. The beads form a rung between the two cords. Knot the stitch to secure, but don't cut the thread.



3 Run the needle inside the bias cord to the next marked point. Take a tiny stitch to anchor the thread at the next location. Pick up a bead rung with the needle as before, and then take a stitch at the point opposite the starting point. Repeat until the bugle-bead ladder is complete.



4 Reinforce the beadwork. Sew back along the strap in the opposite direction, reinforcing the stitches by sewing through the beads a second time. This round of stitching is the one that truly secures the beaded ladder and may take longer to complete than the initial beading did.

SOURCES

For embellishment supplies, try these online vendors:

Beads

ACMoore.com

FireMountainGems.com

Beading and sewing tools

ColonialNeedle.com

Fagoting thread

CreateForLess.com

Leather-punching tools

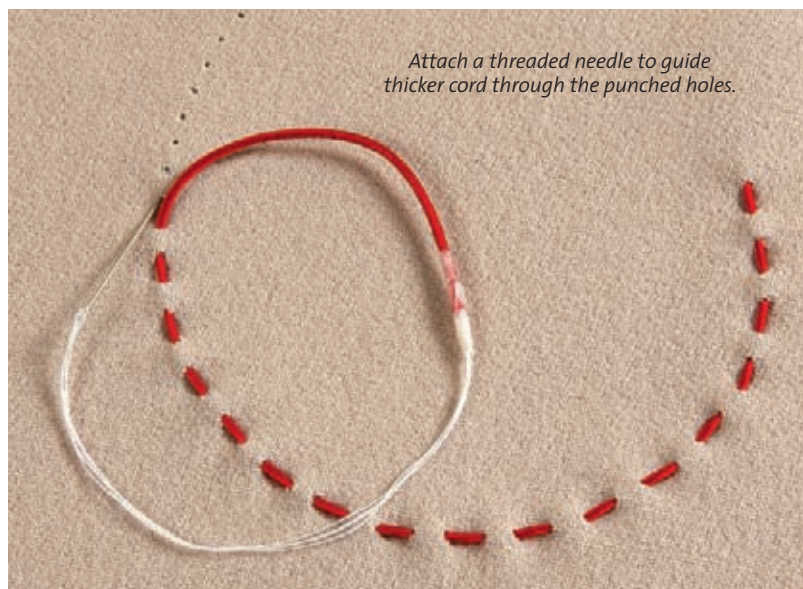
TandyLeatherFactory.com



Accent style lines with bold topstitching

Large-scale, hand-worked topstitching is sometimes called “saddle stitching,” but it’s really nothing more than running stitches. It’s a perfect, frou-frou-free technique for underscoring a garment’s style lines or accenting a great accessory.

1 Mark the stitch placement. For perfectly even, hand-sewn running stitches, work with a tool that marks every stitch. Use a rotary hand-sewing punch or a lacing chisel (shown below) that resembles a fork and marks or punches evenly spaced holes. Work on a protective surface, such as a cutting board or slab of marble.



Bold saddle stitching puts the emphasis in just the right place on this tweed bag (author's original design).

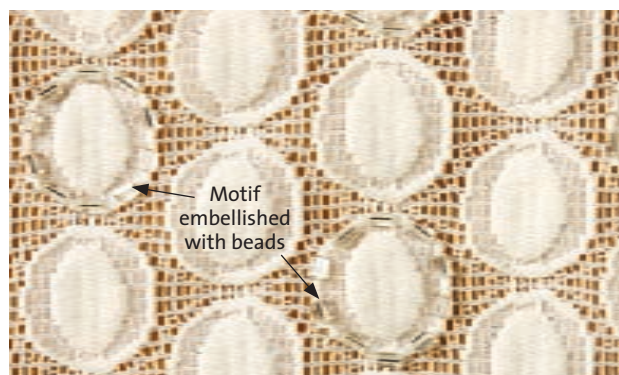


2 Choose a stand-out thread. Heavy threads, embroidery floss, and yarns are excellent choices. You can also try narrow fabric, suede strips, or super-skinny bias tubes. In the sample above, the tubes were made from $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-wide bias strips. Make a few test stitches. If the thread frays, punch the holes fully with the punching tool.

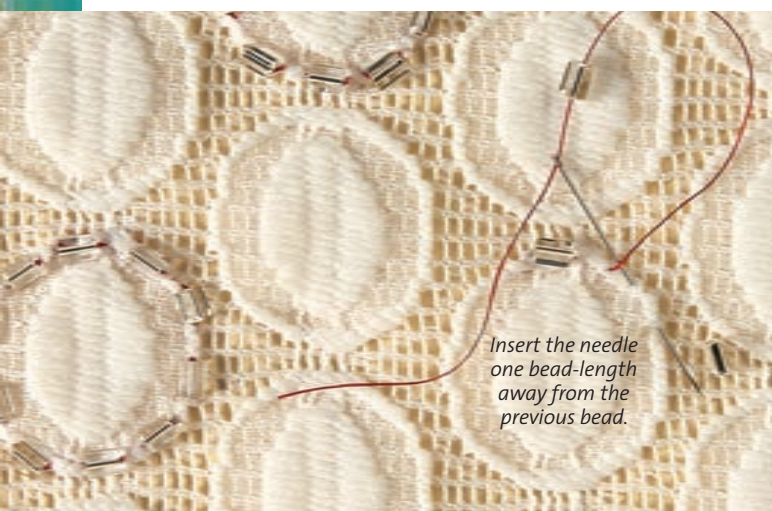
3 Stitch by hand. To prevent the thread or cord end from unravelling, wrap them with cellophane tape, or apply glue or liquid seam sealant (such as Fray Check) to prevent the tip from flaring as it goes through the holes. To facilitate sewing, attach a threaded needle to the end of the cord. The needle helps get the cord through the hole, and the thread pulls it through. Weave the cord or thread through the holes as you would if you were sewing a basic running stitch. Hand-sew both ends of the cord to an inner layer or seam allowance on the wrong side. Or, fuse a scrap of interfacing to the wrong side, and hand-sew the ends to that.

Enhance fabric motifs with tiny beads

Take a cue from a motif in your fabric, and add a touch of glitter with a sprinkling of glass beads. Attach the beads with a simple running stitch, tracing around a printed or woven pattern in the fabric. Whether you plan to bead randomly spaced motifs or create a regular pattern, choose beads of a size and weight that are compatible with your fabric. Here, I used very short, cylindrical beads.



1 Attach the first bead. Thread a thin, sharp, hand-sewing needle with a strand of size-D Nymo beading thread. Knot the end, and bring the needle up from the wrong side of the fabric through the edge of the motif you plan to outline with beads. Use the needle to pick up a bead, and let the bead slide down the thread to the fabric surface. Lay the bead on its side (with the hole parallel to the fabric). Then, in a single motion, insert the needle point into the fabric close to the end of the bead, and back out from the wrong side, leaving a bead-length space between the beads.



2 Complete the motif. Repeat Step 1 to attach additional beads until the entire motif is outlined.

Monochromatic motifs on Vogue 8570 sparkle when outlined with tone-on-tone beads.

