

## **FABRIC AVAILABLE IN NEW PRE- CUT PACKAGES**

### **Courtesy of Quilting Board**

There are new fabric packets available at your local quilt shop and at online quilt stores. Besides regular kits for a specific project, there are jelly rolls, charm square packs, fat quarters, fat eighths, and quilter's candy. We will discuss some unique fabric marketing packages that are available today at your quilt shop or at online quilt stores.

### **Fabric Kits**

Some fabric kits are made up especially for specific patterns. These kits will contain strips, fat quarters, or one-yard cuts and larger depending on the pattern's specifications. Usually they are priced comparably to purchasing cut to order fabric. Generally, these kits simply include the fabric needed to make the project, very seldom are the actual pieces cut for the quilt.

While these kits are good value the fabric is chosen and cut for a specific pattern you are usually limited in your individual design choices. When you purchase some of the other fabric choice alternatives you have much more opportunity to make a project that is more individualized.

### **Five Yard Packets**

Some quilt shops are choosing five coordinating fabrics and cutting one yard lengths and bundling them together in a five-yard package which can be a spring board of a new quilt or by adding a few more fabrics a unique and interesting quilt of your own design. Some shops supply a pattern for a simple quilt that uses five fabrics in one-yard cuts. Some shops carry patterns that can be purchased to use with the five yard bundles.

### **Pillow Case Kits**

Almost every quilt shop sells a pillow case kit. Pillowcases in different fabrics and colors are very popular with children, teens, and adults alike. Novelty fabrics are chosen for the main fabric with coordinating solid like fabrics for the decorative band. Pillowcases are very simple to make and make a quick and inexpensive gift.

### **Fat Quarters**

A fat quarter is a quarter yard of fabric that is cut 18" x 22" rather than a traditional quarter yard cut that is cut across the width of fabric for a piece that measures 9" x 22". A full yard of fabric is cut into two half yard cuts and then again on the fold line to make four fat quarters. A fat quarter is a more useful cut than a long quarter unless you need to cut strips the width of fabric, then you would want a regular quarter yard cut.

Groupings of fat quarters are available in a color coordinated selection or a fat quarter selection could be specifically planned to make a specific project. Fat quarters are usually bundled together with ribbon or string and can be in a set of two or three and as many as the entire line of fabric. Generally, quilt stores sell packs of fat quarters that contain four to 8 fabrics. Part of this is to keep the price in line with an amount the average quilter is willing to spend on an impulse purchase.

Many books and patterns are available that are "fat quarter friendly". Fat quarter quilts are very popular, and many shops carry patterns to make them.

### **Fat Eighths**

A fat eighth is a piece of fabric that is 9" x 22". It is a quarter yard cut on the fold line. Or a fat eighth can be a piece of fabric 10 1/2" x 18 which would be a half yard cut on the fold and in half again on the lengthwise grain. Either cut is still an eighth of a yard. A fat eighth is a lot more usable piece of fabric than a traditional eighth yard cut that is a piece of fabric cut 4 1/2" wide by the width of the fabric.

Fat eighth sets are readily available and purchasing a set of fat eighths would yield a small amount of many different fabrics that would be useful for any scrappy project.

## **Jelly Rolls**

The jelly roll is such a cute name for a fabric purchase; a jelly roll is formed from multiple strips of fabric cut 2 1/2" wide by the width of fabric. Forty strips are rolled together and tied with a ribbon or string. When packaged this way they have the appearance of a large jelly roll. The colors of fabrics are rolled together and make a unique jelly roll appearance. Jelly Rolls have the appeal of a bakery jelly roll with zero calories.

If you do the math a jelly roll of 40 cuts 2 1/2" wide is equal to one hundred inches or 2 3/4 yards of fabric. At the suggested retail price of thirty dollars that makes your fabric almost eleven dollars a yard. Obviously, you are paying a little extra for the convenience of having this large of selection already cut. The beauty of this type of packaging is you receive one or two strips 2 1/2" wide of all or most of the different fabrics in a particular fabric line.

## **Charm Square Packs And Samplers**

Charm squares are usually 5" squares that are pre-cut most often including one square from each fabric in a particular line. One manufacturer features charm squares in a small flat tin box and includes a pattern to make a small project using the fabrics.

Charm square patterns have proliferated in the past few years and there are many available to choose from. Some patterns require more than one set of squares so you need to choose a pattern that is compatible with the number of squares in your charm set.

Some patterns are as simple as stitching the squares together and in some patterns the charm squares are cut in a way to add interest to the quilt. When choosing a pattern check to make sure you have enough squares in your set to make a specific pattern.

There are several patterns and books devoted entirely to projects to be made using jelly roll strips and charm squares. Baby quilts, wall quilts, lap quilts and many other projects are available to make with jelly roll strips. There is even a book for a strip "project of the month" with a seasonal or holiday theme for each project.

## **Quilter's Candy**

Quilter's candy is a charm square that is folded and rolled and wrapped in cellophane or simply tied with a small piece of ribbon. They look like a small piece of wrapped candy and a dish of them setting on a table in your studio would add interest and fun to your quilting and non-quilting visitors.

If you find a pattern that calls for charm squares or jelly rolls, you can still cut your own squares or strips from your stash. The difference is that you are doing all the cutting. So you need to consider the amount of labor involved in cutting your own squares and strips when considering the purchase of a jelly roll or charm square set.

While some of the pre-cut fabric kits may be a small percentage more expensive than purchasing fabric the pre-cut strips or squares give many design possibilities especially if you wish to use a lot of fabrics or an entire line of fabric. You need to keep the time saving convenience of having all your strips or squares cut against the small increase in price.

You will find that purchasing jelly rolls and charm squares are like purchasing convenience foods, consider them as convenience fabrics.

## **Pressing Your Patchwork**

Pressing is different from ironing. For ironing the iron is moved back and forth across the fabric. Ironing with a sliding motion can cause distortion of fabric pieces, especially bias edges of triangles. In pressing the iron is lifted and placed down on the fabric. When pressing simply press the iron firmly on the seam area. Lift the iron and place it in another spot. Don't iron by moving the iron back and forth.

Most books and quilting teachers recommend that each seam be pressed after stitching. Keep your iron next to your machine on a small table. After stitching a seam, be sure to press before joining block sections to other block sections. When you are finished stitching and joining sections, turn your block to the right side and give it a good press.

I press with a dry iron set on wool or cotton. I seldom use steam. The only time I use steam is if I am piecing eight or sixteen pieces to the center. When there are many pieces coming together in the center a little hump or "volcano" forms. I still do not put water in my iron. I use a simple inexpensive spray bottle and spritz the area and then press by lifting and pressing and lifting and pressing. Do not slide the iron. The spritz of water makes enough steam to set the seam allowances.

A note caution - If you do not pre wash your fabric do not use a steam iron to press. The steam may shrink your fabric in one direction more than the other causing distortion of your pieced project.

I also finger press and use a small wooden tool purchased at the quilt shop to press. To finger-press place the side of your thumbnail on the seam allowance and move it across to set the seam allowance to one side. The wooden tool does the same as finger pressing but is simply a tool to use rather than your fingernail. If you are doing a lot of piecing at one time a tool will help save on your thumbnail.

Make a small ironing pad by covering a cardboard bolt board with batting and then tightly woven cotton fabric. Tack it down with thumbtacks or duct tape. Ask for a bolt board at your local fabric store. They usually throw them away and are glad to give them to you. Or purchase a small ironing pad and place it on a small table next to your sewing machine.

Pressing a quilt top is important and you should press as well as possible but don't obsess about it so much that it makes you not enjoy the quilting process.