

MORE INFORMATION ON MAKING THE PRE-FELT GROUND FOR THE CROCUS SAMPLER

Patricia Spark © 2006

Here are some photos to help you figure out how to make the pre-felt background for the crocus sampler.

For this pre-felt, you will need your wet felting equipment, the green and purple top and a 10.5 inch square of paper to use as a guide. It is a half inch larger than the final pre-felt size, to allow for shrinkage.



1. With your hands about eight inches apart, gently pull off a length of the merino top approximately 15 inches long. Notice that my hands are above my work surface. I have the paper square covered by plastic and

the bubble wrap. My bubble wrap wasn't wide enough so I had to tape it on the smooth side with duct tape. The smooth side is facing up.

2. Split the length of roving into four equal parts lengthwise. To do this, put your fingers up in the middle of the roving, and quickly pull it apart. Then separate these halves again to make the fourths. I do this because the

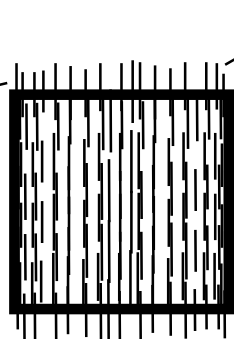


PARALLEL-PERPENDICULAR RULE

If the fiber is perpendicular to the edge of the background, it goes over the edge by half its length. If the fiber is parallel to the edge, it comes up to the edge and then stops without going over.

First Fiber Layer

edge perpendicular to the fiber

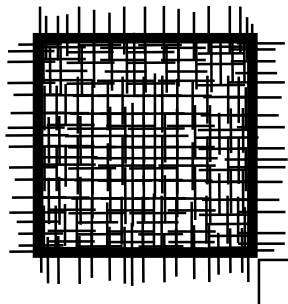


fiber

edge parallel to the fiber

This rule eliminates bulky corners on the pre-felt. Notice that there is no fiber in the corners.

Second Fiber Layer

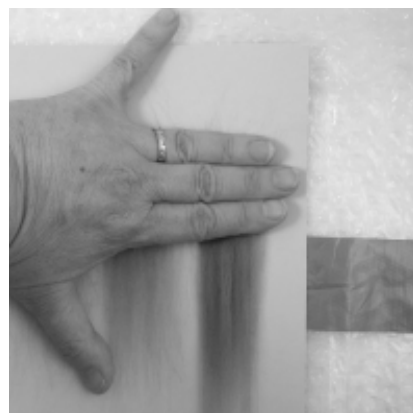


Corner with no extra bulk.

roving is too wide for my hands and if I use it at its normal width, it will be too hard to control when I'm putting it down to make the layers for the pre-felt.

3. Using the 10.5 inch paper square as your guide, follow the parallel-perpendicular rule and begin to put down the first layer of wool for the pre-felt. I started with the green. Since I am right handed, I began in the upper left corner. It is best not to have the layers too thick. For this background pre-felt, I made four layers. You can choose the actual thickness of your layers. Try this test. Lay down some of the split length of roving, and put one finger on the end of the fibers, pushing them down into the work surface. Pull away the end of the roving with your other hand. You will have a thin bit of fiber left behind. (See photos on next page.) Then put two

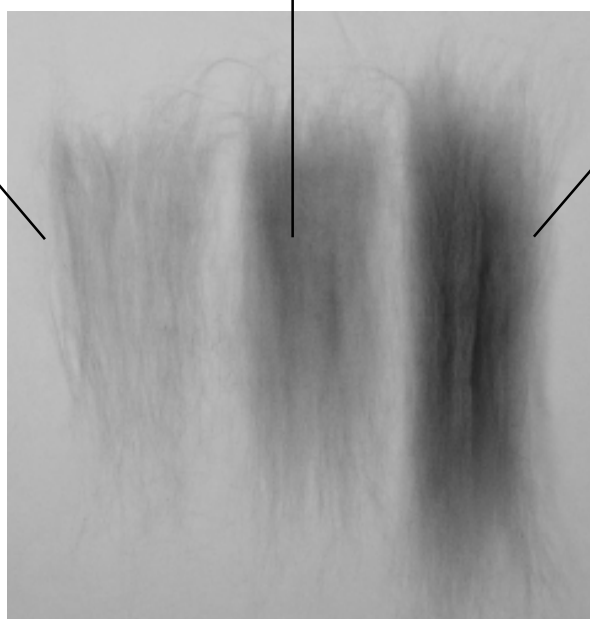
fingers on the end of the fiber and pull the roving away. Finally try putting three fingers down on the tip of the roving and pulling away. I thought the two fingers worth of fiber was the right amount for my layers. So for my layout I used the two finger approach.



one finger

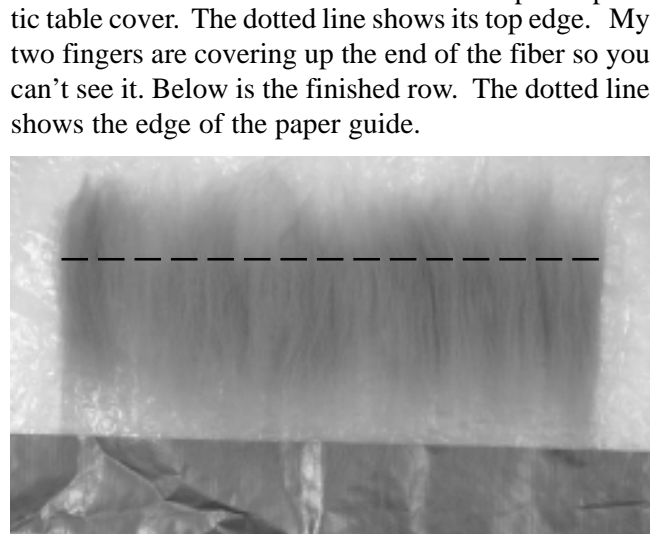
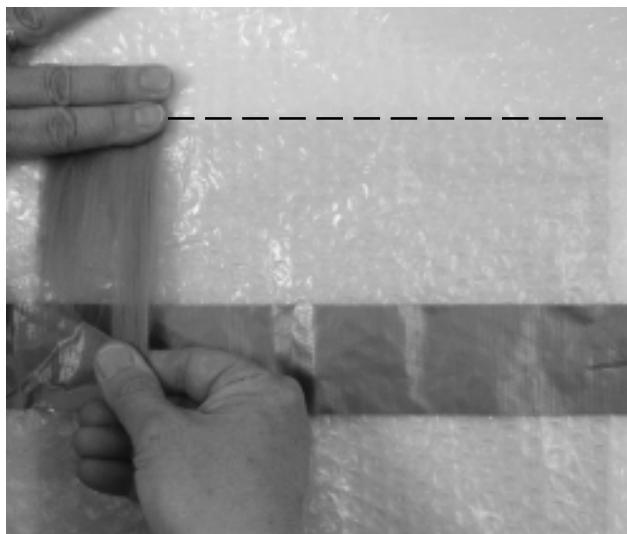
two fingers

three fingers



Notice that the density and length of fiber differs according to the number of fingers used to hold it down as you pull.

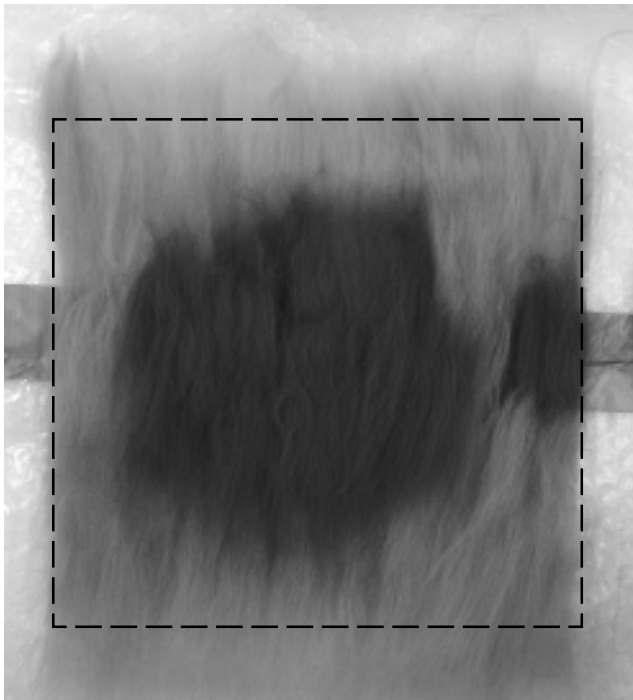
In the bottom left photo, I am using two fingers, to lay out the fiber across the top of the pre-felt area. The paper guide is underneath the bubble-wrap and plastic table cover. The dotted line shows its top edge. My two fingers are covering up the end of the fiber so you can't see it. Below is the finished row. The dotted line shows the edge of the paper guide.



4. Put down another row, overlapping the first row slightly like shingles on a roof. Notice that my two fingers are overlapping the previous row.



5. Look at your crocus design and figure out approximately where the major purple areas will start. I put purple into this second row. Split down your purple roving, and use it in the same manner as the green roving. The photo below shows the finished layer with the purple put in. The dotted square is the edge of the paper guide. Notice how the fibers are laid out following the parallel-perpendicular rule.

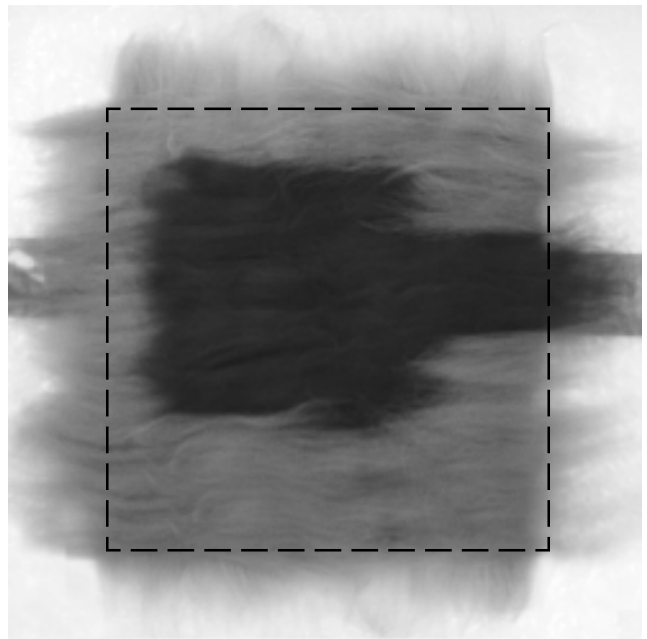


6. The next layer goes in the opposite direction. I am still using two fingers to get the density. I don't begin

the layer at the top of the fiber, but down at the place where the paper guide begins. You will not be able to see this guide, so you will just have to imagine it.

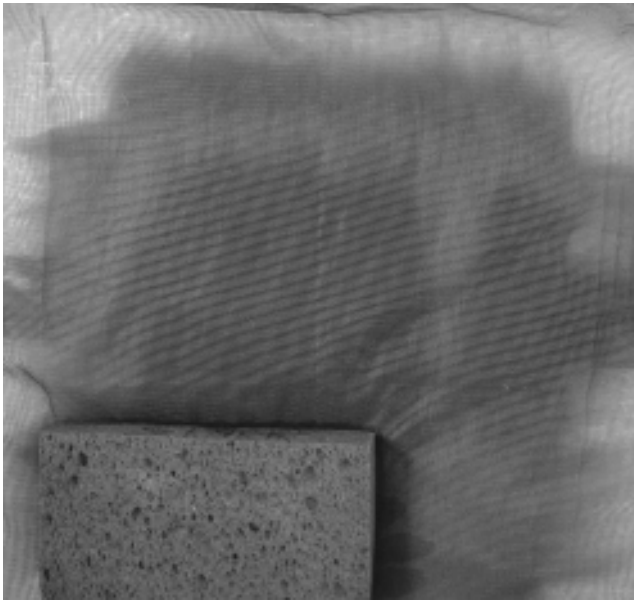


7. Put the purple into this layer as well, above the area where the purple was in the first layer. The photo below shows the completed second layer. Because of the direction of the fiber, the purple areas overlap slightly. The dotted square shows the edge of the paper guide.



8. Complete the next two layers in the same manner.

9. When you have the four layers finished, cover with the felting net. Swish the olive oil soap around in a half quart of lukewarm water until the water looks milky. Remove the soap. Using the cellulose sponge, wet down the net-covered wool stack. Push down on the sponge to add water and remove the air from the fiber. You want it wet but not sippy. See photos on next page.



Sponging on the soapy water.

10. Carefully lift up on the net to see if the fiber is all wet. The net might stick to some of the fiber, so don't just jerk it off. Peel it back, watching closely. Assess the piece for wetness and lay the net back down. Add more water if you need to.

11. Take off the net and fold up the edges of the pre-felt, following the paper guide. Don't try to fold them under or you will cause the wool shape to distort. If you have any thin spots, you can add more fiber.

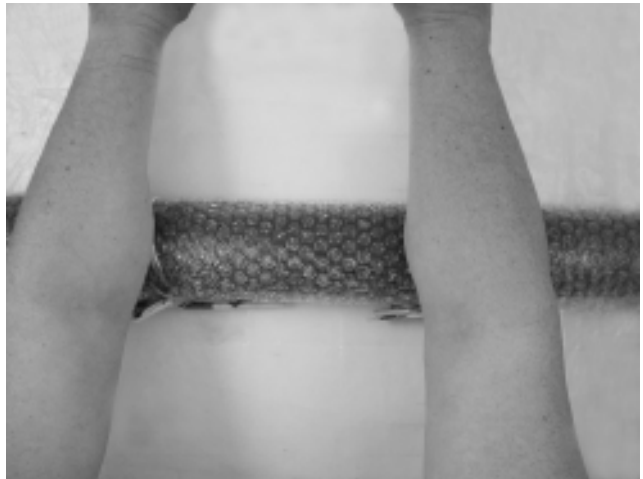
12. Now begin rolling the felt. Lay the rolling bar on one end of the bubble wrap. Carefully roll up the net covered wool, together with the bubble wrap, around the rolling bar.



Rolling up the net-covered wet wool.

13. Tie the roll with strips of T-shirt or cut lengths of nylon stockings. (I use strips of cotton-lycra knit.)

14. Rotate the roll back and forth with your forearms. Move forward, then back from your wrist to your elbow.



Roll forward from wrist to elbow, and then back to the wrist. This up and back movement is considered one count.

15. Rotate the roll 50 times, then unroll it. Lift up on the net to make sure it isn't attaching to the felt. Turn the piece 90 degrees, replace the net and roll up again. Rotate another 50 times. Unroll, flip the piece over, turn it 90 degrees and rotate another 50 times. Unroll, rotate 90 degrees, re-roll from the fourth edge and rotate 50 times. The piece will now have been rolled 50 times from all four edges, and on both sides, a total of 200 rolls. It is important to roll from the four different edges because the area next to the soft rolling bar that comes in your kit doesn't get as hard as the end you're pressing down upon. You need to turn the piece over so that both sides can get worked against the bubble wrap.

16. Rinse out the pre-felt and wring it in a towel. While it is still damp, pull out the edges so that it is nice and straight. Lay it flat to dry. When dry, the background will be ready for the crocus image. Have fun with it!!!