

# A ROYAL ROSE CUSHION

Have a go at making your own bloomin' beautiful cushion by Louise Thomas



**T**he Queen Elizabeth rose is my favourite. Blousy big pink blooms present themselves mostly in long-stemmed clusters – like chummy little ballerinas, who have dressed themselves with varying success and then can't go anywhere without their mates. In a house my family and I lived in, we had a beautiful Queen Elizabeth rose, with large pink blooms in singles and clusters

and glossy dark-green leaves, which did a marvellous job of hiding the neighbour's brick garage. The rose was a present from my late mother-in-law and we were loathe to leave it behind, but it was simply too big to dig up. And besides, the new owners would probably notice the huge void. I decided I would 'honour' it with a painting, or maybe that should be 'humour' it with a painting (especially since I didn't have the right pink). Either way, I liked the resulting

watercolour and decided a tapestry cushion could be another variation on the theme. I went for an aqua background to make the pink really pop, and managed to match the pink wool as a closer fit to the rose's original colour than I did with my limited water colour palette. The finished cushion is an ancestral gift, something to remember my mother-in-law by, which hopefully, my daughters will want to keep and pass on. >>

## MATERIALS:

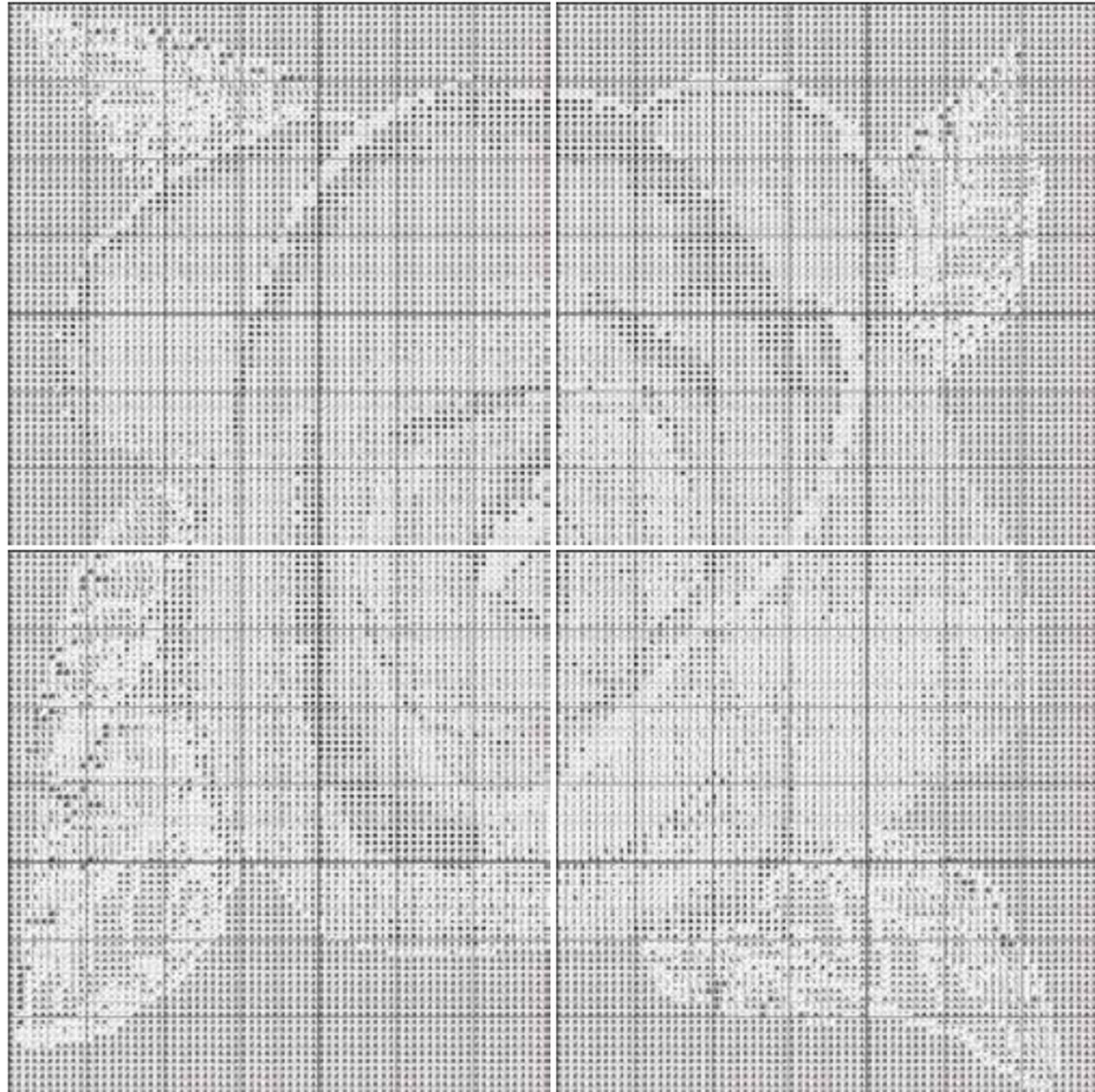
- At least 17 x 17" (43.2cm square) of 10-mesh (10 holes per inch) double-thread cotton canvas. I use a larger sheet as I prefer to mount my canvas on a frame for stitching. The finished tapestry is 14" (35.6cm) square.
- See the key for wool numbers and quantities in both DMC and Anchor Tapisserie Wools. The cushion in the photo has been worked in Anchor Tapisserie Wools. The quantities required are rounded up to the nearest skein, so expect a few left-overs. The quantities given are those required if you work the tapestry in continental tent stitch. I only used a few centimetres of the second skein of 8436 and 9022, so if you use it more conservatively (I had to unpick a few bits when I changed the pattern around) you might get away with one.
- Approximately 1.48m of aqua piping or other suitable trim.
- Approximately 0.5m square of Warwick's Aqua Macrosuede, or other suitable cushion backing material
- One 30cm zipper in matching colour, or buttons if you prefer.
- Matching sewing thread.
- A cushion inner to fit

## TOOLS

- A frame – but if you don't have one, don't let it stop you. I've always got a better result using a frame; the canvas stays taut and the finished work doesn't warp. If not using a frame, just be aware that the tapestry may need to be stretched back into shape when finished.
- A size 18 tapestry needle, or similar blunt needle that can fit the wool through, but which doesn't stretch the canvas holes.
- Embroidery and fabric scissors
- Sewing machine – or a needle and thread if you're going old school.

**TIP: WITH REGARDS TO WOOL LENGTH ON THE NEEDLE, I FIND THAT ABOUT 60CM IS ABOUT THE MOST YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH, WITHOUT IT KNOTTING AND BEING A PAIN TO PULL THROUGH THE CANVAS**



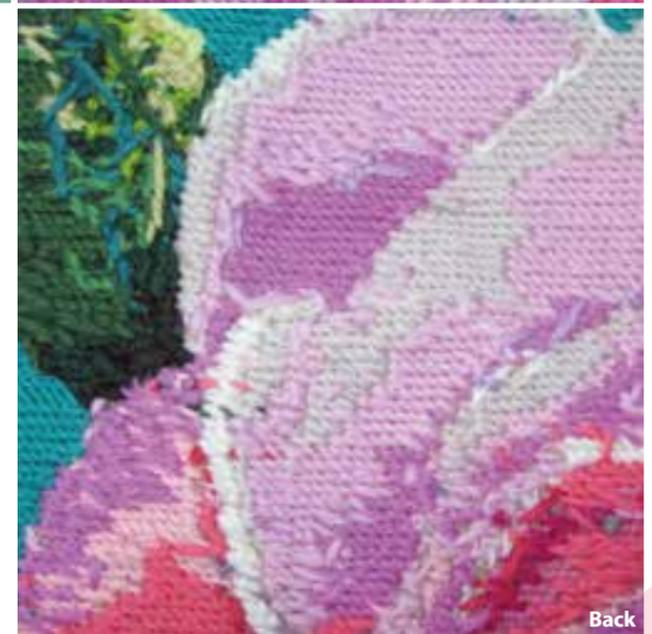


Front

Queen Elizabeth Rose Wool Chart

Color	Wool Brand	Wool Type	Wool Weight	Wool Length	Wool Quantity
Light Pink	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool
Dark Pink	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool
Red	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool
Green	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool
Blue	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool
White	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool
Black	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool	Wool

Download the chart from our website [www.creativewithworkbox.com](http://www.creativewithworkbox.com)



Back

**METHOD**

Mount the canvas on a square or oblong tapestry frame if using one. I use small safety pins to secure it at the top and the bottom to the fabric bit of the frame and then roll each side taut. If the sides of the canvas are prone to fraying just use some masking tape up the side edges to keep it all secure.

With regards to wool length on the needle, I find that about 60cm is about the most you can get away with, without it knotting and being a pain to pull through the canvas. To start, simply leave a 2.5cm length of wool at the

back, which will lie underneath the first 10 or so stitches.

Following the chart, work the tapestry in tent stitch using one strand of wool (the wool as it is, don't double it or split it). I prefer continental tent stitch which forms long neat slanted stitches on the reverse side.

The suggested wool quantities are for this method. It uses a lot more wool, but the finished tapestry is thicker and the back looks tidier as wool can be threaded underneath the sloped stitches on the back when jumping from place to place. You can also use half-cross stitch which uses

much less yarn, but the back of the canvas isn't covered, the finished work is thinner and the back definitely less tidy. But if you are not worried about the back, then this option is fine. You will need a double-thread canvas for this stitch. Whichever stitch is used, try to use an even tension – don't pull the thread too tight. When the tapestry is finished, cut out the work allowing about a 2.5cm canvas border all the way around. If it needs to be stretched back into shape, a process called blocking, spray the back of the work with water to dampen it. Blot the

tapestry with paper towels to mop up any excess water. Tack it flat around the edges and to the correct shape onto a piece of board – I use an old ply drawing board. Do not tack it through the work itself and use rust-less drawing pins. Leave it to dry well.

Use the finished canvas as a template for cutting out the backing material (although make sure you cut it square). If mounting the zipper between the piping and the backing, then only cut out one piece of fabric. If mounting the zipper part-way up the back, or using

buttons, then cut out two suitable pieces of material, allowing extra for the seam in the middle or an overlap for buttons. Join the material at each end leaving a suitable space for the zipper. Pin the zipper in place and stitch.

If putting the zipper between the piping and backing, make sure to put it at the bottom end of the tapestry pattern.

Pin and sew the piping around the tapestry edge on the front of the tapestry, sewing as close as possible to the edge of the worked pattern. Sew the backing fabric all the way around if you have

already attached the zipper in the middle, or sew the backing along the sides and top and about 2cm in either side of the bottom where the zipper will be attached. Pin and sew in zipper. I used a zipper foot for both the piping and the zipper. Lastly, trim and overlock any seam edges, allowing about a 1.5cm seam. If you don't have an overlocker, zig-zag stitch or similar would be fine.

Insert the inner. Give it a bit of a slap and that's it! 

Louise Thomas is a writer, editor and artist living in Lower Hutt, New Zealand. She specialises in writing about science issues and has won awards for her science reporting. She also enjoys photography and drawing, with commissions including botanical drawings and other science illustrations. She is also a needlepoint enthusiast, and has recently decided that life is too short to not do more of the stuff you love. When she isn't writing, playing in the garden or with needlepoint, she is usually found at the netball courts coaching schoolgirl netball. Contact Louise on [louise@louisethomas.co.nz](mailto:louise@louisethomas.co.nz), check out her website at [www.louisethomas.co.nz](http://www.louisethomas.co.nz) or find her on Facebook (louisethomaswriter).

All photographs courtesy of Louise Thomas