

Crumb Quilted Blocks by Kathy Nutley 2022

What is so enticing about using small scraps to create something larger and useful? Could it be that we can't bear to throw beautiful fabric away? Obviously it speaks to us if it's in our stash! How many of us have bags, drawers or containers of small pieces we promise ourselves we're going to use someday? Possibly it's the lure of the creativity it will take to make it happen. Well, now is the time!

Crumb quilting: is the process of using leftover fabric pieces to create in essence a new piece of usable fabric yardage.

Crumb quilting allows for a great deal of color play. Fabric scraps can be organized into color families, colors that compliment each other or used randomly. Scraps do not need to be a particular size and or shape to be appropriate. Smaller scraps can be sewn together before adding to the tape to make for a larger and even more interesting and eye-catching outcome.

No special sewing tools are needed other than a sewing machine in good working order and a pair of fabric scissors. Here is a photo of the tools I find most helpful, but again they're optional. This technique offers the opportunity to use up left over bobbins as well as spools of unused colors.



There is more than one way to begin sewing a crumb quilt block. I'm going to share my two favorite methods here. Neither of these two methods require any seams to match up! Use a 1/4" seam allowance for both methods.

Method #1: Random

Begin with a small 5-sided shape (creates a bit more interest). Trim a fabric piece if need be.



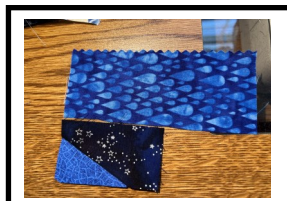
Choose a second piece of fabric with an edge a bit longer than one side of the original piece. Sew edges RST using a 1/4" seam. Finger-press, roll with a Clover roller or iron the seam. If need be, trim the seam so you're working with a straight edge for the next seam.



Before trimming the seam



After trimming

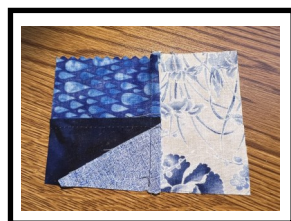


Auditioning the next piece



Love it!

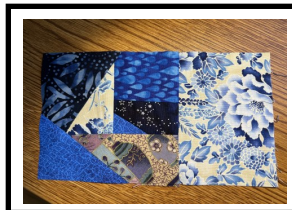
Continue working in this manner until you have the desired size block. It can be easier to work around the original piece in a circular path but you needn't worry. You're able to work in any direction as long as the subsequent piece is longer than the side of the prior piece you're sewing it onto. Working with mostly small pieces? No worries.....sew two or more pieces together to achieve the length you're looking for OR trim the "block-to-be" as needed. There really are no rules. Below are photos of the process:



The back seams



Auditioning a piece



The lighter color is too much of a good thing!



Looking to create more interest



Seam allowance

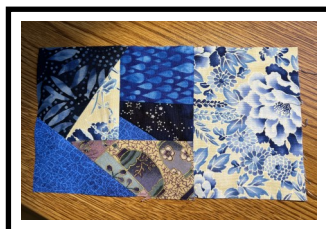
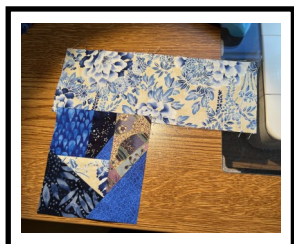
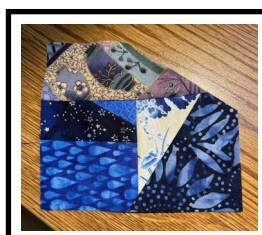
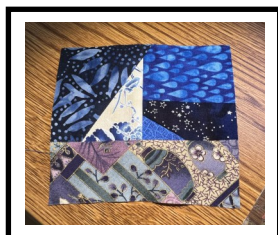


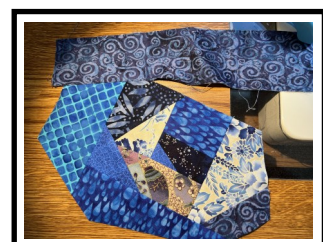
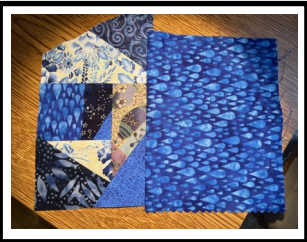
Trimmed seam allowance



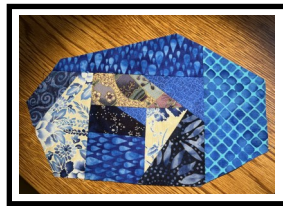
Ready for the next piece

Note: Always trim with an eye as to what you can use in another area or block. And so it continues....

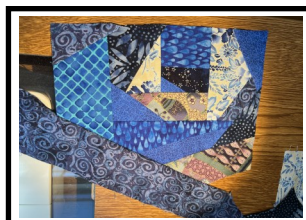
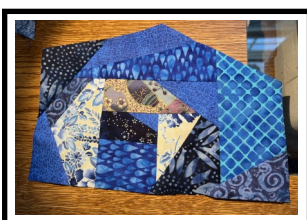




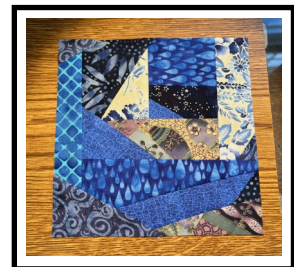
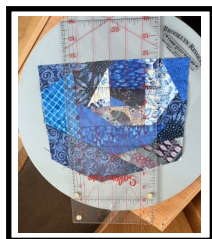
Continuing to add pieces....



Adding larger/longer pieces leads to creative results as you trim new angles...



Be mindful of achieving the length and width of the block you intend to make...



Measure to determine where you may need to add a piece...

Ta da!



Save those trimmings! They're perfect for the next crumb block...whether you're using calculator tape, making a random crumb block or chain piecing a crumb block.

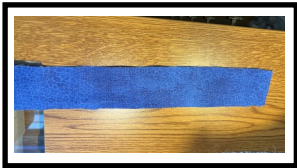
Left-over quilt blocks you're not sure what to do with? Cut them up and use them for crumb quilting blocks. Some of your work is already done for you!

Trimming the "block-to-be" with a clear ruler allows you to audition the look of the block before you trim/cut/square it. Using the width of your rotary cutting ruler will give you perfect 6" blocks (before sewing) but the size is determined by you.

Method #2: Chain Piecing

Begin with a strip of fabric approximately 12" long. The length is not important as long as it's easy for you to manage. Choose small ... even your smallest... fabric pieces and sew them each to the strip, leaving a small space between them. When you reach the end of the strip, cut the "new strips" apart. Begin making four-patches or sew them together again to create strip sets. Continue in this manner until you're satisfied you have enough pieces to form your desired block size. Sew them together randomly as in method #1 or sew them together in strips.

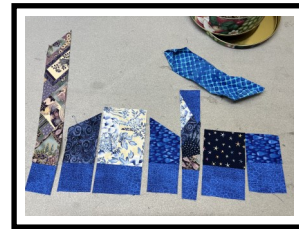
Chain piecing is a fast and easy means of crumb quilting a block.



Choose a strip of fabric approximately 12" long



Begin sewing smaller pieces of fabric to the strip



Continue sewing additional small pieces down the length of the strip, cut apart



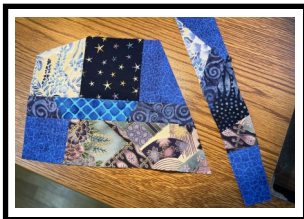
Sew these pieces together, trim



Audition fabric pieces



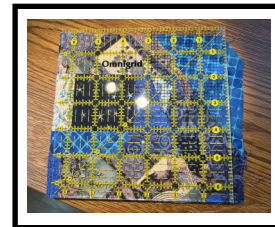
Be creative when trimming



Use trimmings from other blocks



Try using larger/longer pieces to be trimmed after sewing



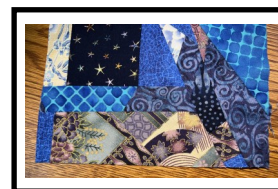
Measure as you work to determine need for additional pieces



Add pieces if needed



Use clear ruler to audition placement



Note: small pieces of fabric on the edges will be absorbed into seams



Trim block on all four sides

A chain pieced crumb block!



Things to consider as you work:

Consider the size and look of what remaining scraps will look like before trimming your block. It's best to audition your block through a clear ruler before cutting.

Small pieces of fabric on edges will get lost in seam allowances.

Add larger pieces to small pieces before cutting to save them for later.

Although this tutorial is directed at creating crumb blocks, there are numerous ways to make use of your crumb quilted yardage:

1. cut into strips for sashing, borders or binding
2. Strips sewn into fun backs
3. Create applique pieces by adding fusible to the back of your yardage and cutting shapes
4. create a larger piece of fabric to be used as yardage for a bag, placemats, sewing machine cover, etc.

So the next time you gaze at the stash of scraps you've collected...think about how smart you are to have been thinking ahead...and be creative!