

Paper Towel Flower Power



Creative
Cardmaking
ideas

By Linnea Nelson

Using die cuts, a variety of inks and plenty of creativity, Linda Accuosti fashions flowers out of paper towels. The flowers become embellishments for stamp art.

In this story, Linda shares her trial-and-error, flower-making techniques. Linda lives in Watertown, Connecticut. Her stamp art has appeared on four *RSM* covers, as well as in numerous issues of the magazine and in the most recent

art book, *Stamping All Year Long*.

“I always had a love of paper and ink and paints,” shares Linda, “but back when I was a young mother with no time for art, my husband was a Connecticut state trooper who worked evenings, so I was alone at night. When the children were asleep, stamping was the perfect match for me—and it still is.”

Linda started stamping about 25 years ago when her neighbor and friend, Linda Mangini, “returned from a local craft fair and showed me a PSX birdbath image embossed



Floral Jubilee / Linda Accuosti

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(Die cut credits: Sizzix, Die-Namics, Savvy, Impression Obsession, Spellbinders, Our Daily Bread.)

in gold with a streak from a blue marker and glitter for the water. I honestly didn't believe she'd made it herself, until she repeated the process (in her toaster oven!). That was it for me."

Along the way, Linda collected a few groups of "crafty" friends who exchange ideas. One group, Friends at HeArt, originated from a local stamp store many years ago and now meets once or twice a year, including a fun-filled Valentines exchange luncheon.

Another group of four met at a stamp store class and tries to keep the learning going even though the store has closed. A third group of four meets more often, especially when one of them has an exciting product or process to share.

Creating the Blooms

Ideas, ideas, ideas—Linda's crafty friends love to share magazines that offer ideas for stamping projects.

"Although some friends save their entire magazines, I mark pages with comments, noting what appealed to me, such as design, color or use of patterned paper," she says. "Then these pages are pulled and filed for prompts as needed."

When Linda began making the cards shown on these pages, her assortment of purchased paper flowers was mostly large pieces. She was struck by the thought of making her own, smaller flowers from small dies in her collection. In order to blend in with the die-cut shapes, they needed to be much softer than card-



Hello / Linda Accuosti
(Credits: Sentiment die—Serendipity; flower die—Spellbinders.)

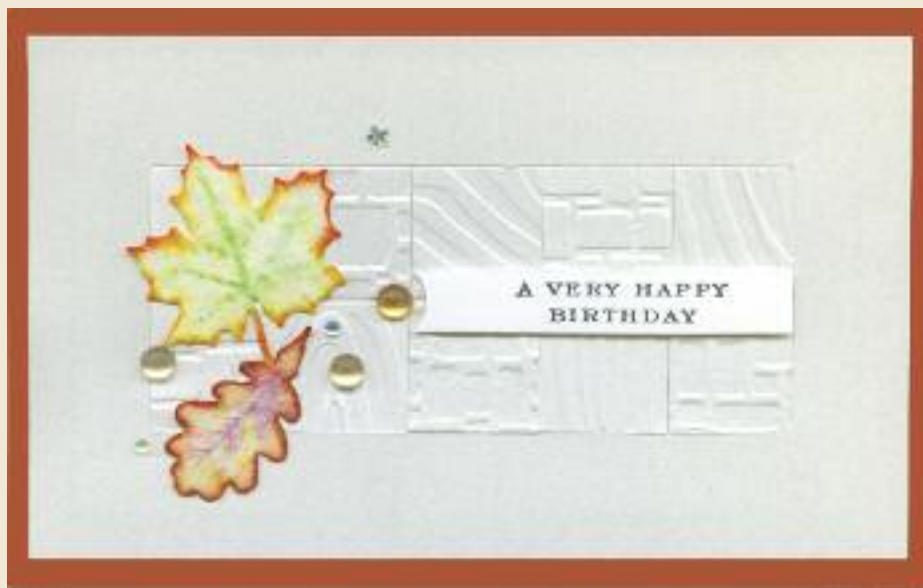
Leaves

"I saw a design on a card on Pinterest and fell in love with the idea of embossed squares," says Linda. "I'm naturally drawn to grids of every kind and even wear a lot of plaid!"

She found making the central opening was easy. She just traced and cut a rectangle. Properly fitting the embossed squares inside was tricky, she notes. It turns out they had to be adjusted bit by bit to fit just right.

The pearly white paper is one Linda often uses for special occasions, and this card was for a special occasion—her son's birthday.

"I was happy to find a copper-colored mirror sheet (for the backing) in my inventory," she says. "I thought it was a great color for the leaves and an October occasion."



Leaves / Linda Accuosti
(Credits: Sentiment—Plaid/Anna Griffin; dies—Impression Obsession; folders—Darice; gems—Hero Arts; star—Martha Stewart.)

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stock, so the idea of layered paper toweling came to her. Two-ply Bounty towels, always at the ready with Windex on her desk, seemed the material most likely for success.

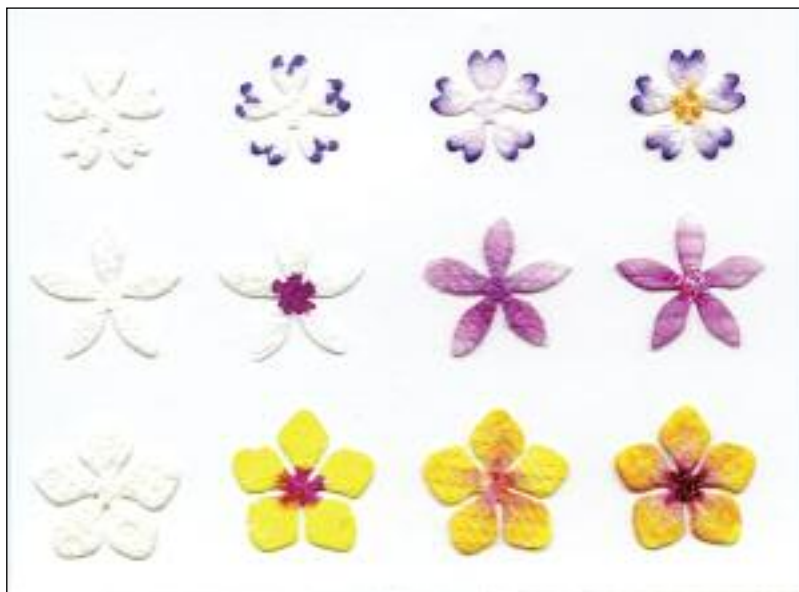
She started out by trying several types of glue. What worked best was brushing a white glue rather heavily onto her cutting mat. She pressed a full paper towel sheet into the glue. She then brayered that onto a second, dry towel and got better results.

She discovered white glues and Yes paste worked well, but Golden medium, although an adhesive, did not. Glue sticks were also hit or miss, but these worked well for touch-ups where adhesion was weak.

Trying different towels

After much experimentation, Linda realized the center was really the only important point of adhesion, especially if the flowers were to be stacked and petals curled into realistic shapes. Although the Bounty towels worked well, the surface was rather bumpy, so she tried a thinner Scott towel for texture variety.

She then found Viva towels



Coloring the Flowers

“The great fun came in the coloring process, when I applied alcohol-based marker ink and watched it spread magically to create the look of real flowers,” says Linda.

Again, experimenting helped her find the method that worked best. Applying ink to the center of the flower then dropping isopropyl alcohol on the center pushes the color into the petals. Applying ink to the edges of the petals and dropping alcohol on the petal edges will push color inward.

She had the most fun playing with autumn leaves, where a variety of colors can be blended for a very realistic result.

(Credits: Flower dies—Our Daily Bread, Elizabeth Craft.)

Flower-making Advice

Linda shares this advice for making paper towel flowers:

- Be sure to have a generous supply of die-cuts on hand because coloring is fast and easy.
- Rubber stamp scrub pads are a good surface for drying alcohol-saturated items because air is able to circulate from beneath and above. A heat gun can speed up the process.
- Water-based markers, blended by dropping on toweling that's dampened with a bit of water, also provide a good result with no alcohol needed. Although the colors are not as brilliant, the process is equally intriguing.

- When the flower has dried, more color can be added to create additional details.
- Petals can be shaped and flowers layered to create dimension.
- A bit of glitter or a gem in the center adds a nice finishing touch.
- For assembling complicated flowers, digital photos are helpful. Linda used a photo reference when making the Flower Cart card shown on the facing page.
- Arrange finished die-cuts on your card and consider taking a photo for reference. This can make the process easier when gluing layers in place.

worked best to create a smooth texture. Looking beyond paper towels, she realized that K-cups have replaced many coffee makers, and there seems to be an excess of coffee filters available. She tried those too. Even with three layers, the result is much stiffer than paper towels, but still usable.

Once the glue is dry, the towels or coffee filters can be die cut or even punched, depending on the type of material used. Linda found Viva towels were too thick for her punches—but perhaps others will find success with punches they have on hand.

Saying “Hello”

Linda’s closest stamping partner, Diane Tignor, let her borrow the “Hello” die shown on this card, along with another helpful die.



Flower Cart / Linda Accuosti

(Credits: Sentiment—Savvy Stamps; embossing folder, wheel flower—Stampin Up; ink—Versa Magic; circle punches—EK Success, McGill; leaf dies—Cottage Cutz; flower dies—Memory Box, Elizabeth Craft, Our Daily Bread, Savvy, Die-Namics.)

“When I discovered the paper toweling technique, I wanted to try it on a row of flowers. Once on a card, the flower row looked rather lonely so I liked the idea of Diane’s “Hello,” which was cut into a light green cardstock, then darkened with Copic markers.”

The pink background paper already had glittered dots, so that carried through the card’s layers to add a bit of interest. Linda feels that flowers seem finished when they have a glittered center, though these tiny flowers were not very easy to work with. Using a light touch, she added sparkles with Stickles glitter glue. She finds it easier to control the placement of Stickles, compared to adding loose glitter powder.

Flower Cart

Linda’s inspiration to make soft flowers from paper toweling came from a page in a (now defunct) magazine that featured handcrafted cards of all kinds, not necessarily stamped.

“I was smitten with a flower cart adorned with ‘yo-yos,’ which are simply circles of fabric gathered at the edges to create a dimensional round shape,” she explains. “For the card in the magazine, the yo-yos had a button sewn in the center to give the look of a flower.

“My stamping mind quickly moved to the idea of filling the cart with paper flowers and die-cut leaves for a fellow stamper’s birthday card. The large flowers on the top are intentionally hiding the card’s fold, so that the cart appears to be open already and full.

“Creating the flower wheels just came to me,” remarks this versatile stamper. “They were not on the original photo nor on the first card I made. Cards have a way of evolving with each successive piece.”

Linnea Nelson is a staff member at RubberStampMadness.