heirloom-tomato pincushions

These sewing-box staples are just as sweet as garden-grown tomatoes, and you don’t have to wait until summer to enjoy them. For pincushions with symmetrical shapes, begin at step 1; start at step 3 for cushions with the uneven contours common in heirloom varieties.

MATERIALS basic sewing supplies; cotton or any other medium-weight fabric (such as corduroy or velvet); cotton or polyester fill; large embroidery needle; perle cotton; scraps of green felt (for caps); fabric glue

HOW-TO 1. Cut a rectangle of fabric on the bias that’s twice as long as it is wide (the yellow tomato—3½-inch [8cm] diameter when finished—required a 10-by-5-inch [25.5cm x 12.5cm] piece). With the fabric facing right-side up, fold it in half as shown, and join the ends with a ¼-inch (6mm) seam allowance. Sew a running stitch around the top edge; tightly pull the thread to cinch the fabric, and secure with a few backstitches.

2. Turn the pouch right-side out. Stuff with fill (cotton is firmer than polyester). Sew a running stitch around the open end; pull the thread to cinch the fabric. Tack it shut with a few stitches, and knot. To flatten, double-thread the embroidery needle with the perle cotton, and pull it through the “core” a few times. Mimic a tomato’s fluted details by wrapping the thread around the cushion and back through the core several times. Knot the thread at the top to finish.

3. For an heirloom-style tomato, cut a circle of fabric (the red one—3½-inch [9cm] diameter when finished—required a 10-inch [25.5cm] diameter circle). With the fabric wrong-side up, hand-sew a running stitch around the perimeter. Place batting in the center of the fabric and gather the fabric into a pouch around it. Stuff with more batting, then pull the thread to cinch; tack with fluted stitches and knot. Flatten the cushion and apply details, as described in step 2.

4. For the cap, draw a 6-pointed star (see photo 4) onto green felt with a disappearing-ink fabric pen, and cut it out. Using a needle threaded with a single length of perle cotton, sew and knot a loop onto the cap. Glue the cap to the top of the pincushion.