

Protective Sachets

As the sort of person who sews only when it's impractical, I've had to create a couple excuses to do so. Not because I love to sew - quite the opposite! But because I love to be creative, and the medium of thread has too many possibilities to ignore

by Danielle Aditi Lindsey

I cross-stitch regularly, and have bought so many books on teaching myself how to embroider it's just *criminal* that I still haven't done so.

My latest project is making protective and healing sachets. I don't really know what to call them; some would call them gris gris, asafoedita bags, amulets, charm bags, or protection spells. They were created, whimsically at least, to be protective; I've been studying herbal lore the last couple of years, and decided at last to do something with that knowledge.

The lore is simply legends that have been attached to herbs and plants. The magical influences they are supposed to possess. An example would be foxglove, which is supposed to attract faeries, who clothe themselves in the flowers. The little dark specks inside the flowers are, it's said, the handprints of the faery. Or the semi-precious gemstone amethyst, which has been held through the ages as a ward against drunkenness.

About six months ago I took out my sewing supplies, which are really just my cross-stitching supplies, and from it extracted some tightly woven muslin which had been hoarded for another project I'd ended up never starting (a-hem). Gathering together all my notes

about herbs and stones, I worked out a way to put them all together.

The Bag

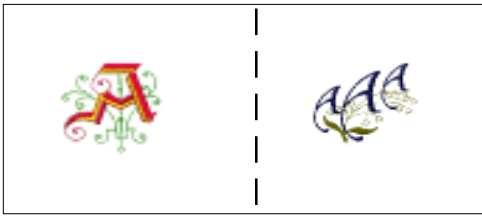
The protective sachets that I've made to this point ranged from barely larger than my thumb, to the width and length of about three fingers. I personally prefer them as small as possible, because adding a handle at the top allows the recipient to hang it from their rear view mirror. (The larger the bag, the harder it is to see through.) But not everyone has used it thus; one friend keeps hers in her backpack, and another is trying to devise a way to wear it. Which, I'm guessing, should have been addressed before said sachet was made.

I didn't put a handle on the healing sachet I just finished. To function as it's designed to, it makes sense for it to be in physical contact with the ill person as much as possible. This could mean, for example, carrying it in their pocket during the day, or sleeping with it under or beside their pillow at night. For which a handle seems superfluous.

To start the bag, I cut out a square piece of muslin half again as large as I think is needed. On the right half of one side of the square (far enough from the edge that I know it won't end up off-centered

when the whole project is complete), I stitch a personal design, which I describe further down below. Then, on the *other* half of the same side, which will be the back of the sachet when I'm finished, I stitch the recipient's monogram. I find the center of the back by folding the cloth and poking my needle through the middle of the front design, giving myself plenty of room to sew up the edges and still end up with the size I want. Once both sides are decorated, the hard part is over.

Fold the cloth in half, with the side you want to show on the *inside*, and draw the desired border in pencil around it. Then sew the bottom and the side shut, leaving the top open to be stuffed. Cut off the excess edges and turn the little bag right side out, using a pin to pull the corners out. Next fill the bag with the pre-selected ingredients, stuffing and stuffing until it bulges nicely, as it will settle. Sew shut the top, using thread that matches the cloth as closely as possible. One possible way to make the top seam less glaringly obvious is to make two straight, parallel lines of stitch across the top, in thread that either matches the cloth **or** your design, then making cuts down through the remaining fabric, making a 'hay-stack' effect. I drug my nails along the top, sort of shredding the fringe until it looked, in my personal opinion, funky and spiky-y.



The middle line above is the fold line; there is one design on front and a monogram on back. I fold the bag in half inside out, draw lines for the size of the bag, and start stitching the bottom side, leaving the top open to be stuffed.

For the handle on the protective sachet, to be added if I know the recipient wants it for their car, I braid together three different-colored ropes of thread — consisting of about four or five strings per color for thickness — that match my design. Making sure it is long enough to fit over a rear-view mirror (I usually have to anchor it between my teeth to braid it, and beware, the dyes taste disgusting! ; \), I knot each end, leaving a little fringe, and sew the knots to each side of the top seam of the sachet. If the sachet will be carried in a pocket, purse, backpack, glove compartment, or briefcase, then naturally no handle is necessary.

Monograms and Embroidery

I decorate the front of the bag with a pattern that feels appropriate to whichever person I intend to give it to. For my husband, that was a sun, for myself, the moon. For my sister, some flowers, and so on. It can be as simple or extravagant as you want it to be. You can create your own, buy them from craft stores (there are many books, or booklets, of “miniature” or “an-hour-or-less” cross-stitch patterns offered for sale), borrow from a friend, or even find them online. I’m not suggesting pirating an illegally offered pattern, since such activities are putting many cross-stitch pattern companies out of business altogether. But many patterns are offered free as ‘specials of the month’, or some such, by the creators of the patterns.

Then on the back of each bag, I embroider a monogram that I’d created from their name, thus identifying who (and who’s stuff) the sachet is supposed to protect, or who it is supposed to aid the healing of.

Runes

The sachets don’t necessarily need to be protective. They are wonderful as an expression of intent, “I intend to love myself more.” “I intend to learn to be more patient.” “I intend to work harder at getting what I want.” “I intend to get along with my daughter.” Etc. Making something like this, and then hanging it somewhere where you can’t avoid looking at it, will be a constant reminder of your pledge, of why you decided this change is important. And reminders are a very good thing.

To facilitate expression of such a pledge onto a sachet, runes might be helpful. Runes are small symbols used to express a larger meaning. This is simplifying the whole business to a huge degree, for which I apologize. But for this purpose, stitching a rune that conveys your intention onto the sachet may be quite a bit more pleasant than trying to stitch the whole pledge, or a whole sentence, onto a little bag. Examples of runes follow this article.

Other possible symbols of interest:

- * The circle **represents spirit, infinity and the Eternal**
- * The circle with a dot (or something else of your choosing) within its boundaries **is spirit made manifest, or tangible.**
- * The Half Circle **is the soul, the essence of an aspect or being.**

Any of the above could be incorporated into whatever design you decide on, or stitched alone to stand for themselves.

I used runes for the healing sachet I made for a friend with cancer. On the front of the sachet (in green, since that is the color for health) I stitched Ur, Lagu, and Sig. Then I found another symbol that stood, basically, for healing, and posed the runes about it. I wanted no doubt regarding the use of this sachet. Now that I think about it, next time I would probably put those runes within the ‘circle with a dot’ mentioned above, to ascertain the healing is supposed to be physical. Putting them within a half circle, on the other hand, would represent that the healing was supposed to be spiritual.

I have the runes Raido hanging in my car, and Ken about my neck. They *symbolize* something for me, as well as expressing it. Not only that, but strangers who see them are not automatically privy to my thoughts, or the pledge contained there-in. I know what it means, and seeing it keeps it fresh in my mind, and *that* is good.

The Stuffing

I fill the bag with crushed herbs, spices, and semi-precious stones, among other things. You must make sure that the cloth you choose is a sufficiently tight weave, to contain even ground herbs and spices, if necessary (this means you will have a harder time cross-stitching a design on the front. Embroidery is doubtless a more efficient method). I’ve compiled a list of herbs and their lore here, so that you needn’t do so if you don’t have the time. The sachets I make are intended to be protective of the person *and* their stuff, which is why it would be hung in a car, or carried in a purse or backpack. This is *my*

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A lot of these ingredients can be found in most kitchen cupboards (or even better, your sister's kitchen cupboards! Yes, yes, I went raiding!

list, meaning I put it together for whatever reason I did, and you should sift through all the meanings and make a different list for your own sachet, taking out whatever doesn't fit your design and adding more of what does. *Improvisation* is a good thing! Making it your own means it will be that much more powerful.

Ingredients:

Herbs:

- ✿ **Mustard Seed** – protection, healing
- ✿ **Rice** – protection
- ✿ **Grass** – protection
- ✿ **Whole peppercorns** – protection
- ✿ **Elder Flowers** – protection, healing, energy, strength, power
- ✿ **Apple** – healing
- ✿ **Potato** – healing
- ✿ **Coriander** – healing
- ✿ **Lemon Balm** – healing
- ✿ **Rosemary** – healing
- ✿ **Rue** – healing
- ✿ **Tansy** – healing
- ✿ **Marjoram** – protection and good luck
- ✿ **Clover** – protection and luck
- ✿ **Catnip** – good luck
- ✿ **Cinnamon** – protection, attracts security, healing
- ✿ **Willow** – healing (willow bark tea is used as a pain killer)
- ✿ **Hazelnut** – healing (the nut)
- ✿ **Myrrh** – healing sachets
- ✿ **Eucalyptus** – carry for health, for stuffing healing poppets

When I've added all the ingredients I want ~ putting emphasis on the ones that I want to work the hardest by adding more of it, I fill the bag the rest of the way with comfrey that I've cut, and dried, out of my sister's back yard.

- ✿ **Fennel** – healing, energy, strength, power
- ✿ **St. John's Wort** – energy, strength, power, healing
- ✿ **Vervain** – energy, strength, power, creativity
- ✿ **Thyme** – accelerates healing, boosts immune system
- ✿ **Dill** – protecting children
- ✿ **Allspice** – luck and health
- ✿ **Caraway** – protection from theft and negativity
- ✿ **Lavender** – protection, anti-depressant, healing
- ✿ **Mint/Peppermint/Spearmint** – travel, protection, healing
- ✿ **Sage** – wisdom, banishing evil, animal guides, immortality, healing
- ✿ **Whole Cloves** – protection, repels negativity, strengthens eyesight
- ✿ **Coffee (bean or ground)** – alertness, mental awareness
- ✿ **Comfrey** – anti-theft, safety during travel, healing
- ✿ **A hair** – of the person which the sachet is supposed to protect (or something else, a tiny picture, maybe, if you'd prefer. This is optional.)
- ✿ **Basil** – flying, protection from negativity (This one I wouldn't add unless the person wanted the sachet specifically for safety in flight, like in an airplane, for instance. Personally, I wouldn't want to encourage flying of any sort in a car, or in my skin.)

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The ones that aren't can simply be left out, if expense is a consideration. Many of these things stand for the same thing, so leaving out 2 ingredients that promise 'protection,' when you already have 2 included, will hardly make a difference! I made it as grand and detailed as I could *because* I could, and quite frankly, because I was bored.

Semi-precious stones:

- Jade** – good luck, healing (heart, kidney, stomach disorders)
- Amethyst** – breaks insomnia and nightmares, peace, strengthens commitment, general healer
- Angelite** – eases anxiety and stress. Creative work
- Garnet** – highly protective, especially after dark
- Malacite** – protective against physical dangers, especially for children
- Smokey Quartz** – overcoming depression and negative emotions, mood elevator
- Tiger Eye** – protection from all forms of danger
- Bloodstone** – said to heal tumors, inflammatory illness, hemorrhages, prophetic powers, avert lightning, conjure storms, preserve health
- Carnelian** – general healing, increasing courage
- Peridot** – healing, guards against nightmares, promotes sleep, anger problems, calms nervousness

Personally, I've only added little chips of jade to my protective sachets, so far, and bloodstone, carnelian, and amethyst in the healing sachets. But the other stones are good possibilities should their lore strike you as something you want symbolized in a sachet.

When I've added all the ingredients I want ~ putting emphasis on the ones that I want to work the hardest by adding more of it, I fill the bag the rest of the way with comfrey that I've cut, and dried, out of my sister's back yard. It stood for the main thing I wanted the sachet for. The finished product ended up smelling (protective sachet recipe, at least) like a pleasant mixture of mint, lavender, and comfrey. Mine still smells strongly enough, after a year, to scent my whole purse. ~♦

~RUNES~

- * **Raido** – travel, transport, defense, communication, message, take control
- * **Ansur** – God, inspiration, blessing, good fortune, wisdom, magic
- * **Ur** – strength, independence, wildness, stability, higher self, determination, health
- * **Ken** – torch, knowledge, guidance, a beacon, learning, artistic creativity
- * **Wunjo** – joy, happiness, good news, harmony, unity, comfort, controlling will
- * **Vaud** – need, distress, binding, constriction, poverty, pressure, necessity
- * **Yr** – rebound, flexibility, outgoing, darkness, nightmares, ghosts, death
- * **Pordra** – fate, destiny, pregnancy, psychic, secret, discovery of hidden, defense
- * **Ilhs** – hunting, protection, hallowing, regal, shield, help, rainbow conductor
- * **Sig** – sun, victory, warmth, success, triumph, centering, luck
- * **Tyr** – battle, conquest, victory, winning, competition, honor
- * **Bjork** – growth, renewal, rebirth, wife, woman, emotional stability
- * **Eh** – journey, process, transformation, loyalty, dignity, telepathic link, adjustment
- * **Mannar** – mankind, Self, identify, strengths, weakness, humanity
- * **Lagu** – healing, mystery, lake, sea, water, emotions, depth, influence, movement
- Ing – good luck, protection, man, husband, well-being
- * **Odal** – home, land, houses, permanence, possession, heritage, past
- * **Dag** – day, exposure, revelation, light, safety, clarity, daytime, prosperity, rendered invisible, between the worlds

Raido



Ansur



Ur



Ken



Wunjo



Yr



Pordra



Sig



Bjork



Eh



Vaud



Lagu



Ing



Odal



Dag



his



Mannar

