



Bias-tube filigree

Sculpt an embellishment with fabric-covered cords

The tendrils on my sugar snap peas along with images I remembered from vintage sewing books inspired me to use bias tubing to embellish a plain neckline. Bias tubing is elegant in its simplicity, flexible in form, and potent with possibility. This special embellishment had a job to do—frame the face of the mother-of-the-groom in an exquisite understated neckline.

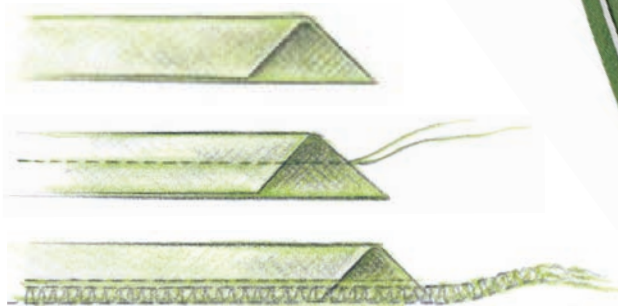
Here, I show you how to duplicate this neckline embellishment. You'll learn everything from making and applying the tubes to the mystery method for creating the curled ends without wire (as with most mysteries, the solution is obvious in the end). I also explain how to sculpt the leaves in fabric and attach everything to your dress. Once you master the basics, apply this technique to other fabrics and necklines for your own elegant, garden-variety style.

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Make and curl the tubes

Most of us have worked with bias-cut fabric on a two-dimensional surface before. It can expand, contract, and shape ripple-free around a curve. The curved ends of the bias tubes use the same principle—but are three-dimensional.

1 Cut six bias strips. Cut 1-inch-wide, 20-inch-long bias strips. Fold a strip lengthwise, wrong-side out. Stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the folded edge. Use a short stitch, and hold the strip evenly taut as you sew. Finish the raw edge with a three-thread serger stitch, if desired; the overcasting helps pad the tube.



2 Turn the tubes right-side out. Any standard tube-turning tool, such as a bodkin, a small safety pin, or bobby pin can help you turn the tubes more easily.



3 Clip and tuck. Clip one tube end straight across, and tuck the raw edges inside the tube. Sew the end closed with tiny hand stitches. Secure the stitches with a knot, but leave a 12-inch-long thread tail. The thread will be used to make the curl on the ends of the tubes. Leave the other tube end unfinished.



4 Bury the thread. Insert the needle through the closed tube end, and reemerge at the seam. Reinsert the needle a scant $\frac{1}{16}$ inch away, and bring it up again a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ inch away. Continue along the seamline for $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches.



5 Pull to curl. Pull on the thread, and tighten it along the seam to produce a curl. Adjust the length of the curl by adding more short gathering stitches. The tightness of the curl is controlled by how snugly the thread is drawn through the seam.



6 Secure the stitches. After adjusting the curls, knot the thread with tiny stitches. Take one more stitch through the seamline, hold the thread taut, and trim it close to the fabric. Pull the tube gently to draw the thread tail inside. Repeat until all six tubes have one curled end.

Tip EASY TUBE TURNING.

Use a loop turner with a latch hook at the end to quickly turn even very thin bias tubes right-side out.



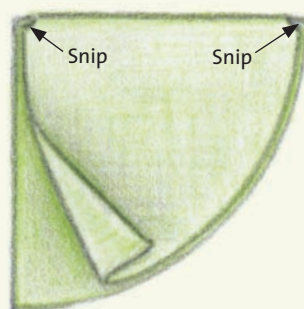
Sculpt the leaves

The leaves on this embellishment anchor the tubes. Each is hand-sculpted from the fabric. Here, linen was used, but other fabrics such as charmeuse or dupioni would work equally well. To re-create my design exactly, you'll need three leaves in three different sizes. The measurements used here produced 1½-inch, 2½-inch, and 3-inch finished leaves.

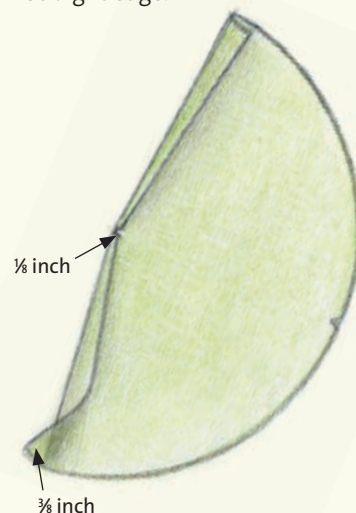
1 Cut three semicircles. Make them 4-, 5-, and 6-inch diameters.



2 Fold each semicircle. Fold the individual pieces in half crosswise, and mark the fold with a ¼-inch-long snip.



3 Unfold and press the straight edge under. Start with a ⅜-inch-wide fold on the rounded edge, and taper it to a ⅛-inch turn in the center of the straight edge.



6 Turn the wedge right-side out. Start near the point, and hand-stitch the opening closed with a single thread.



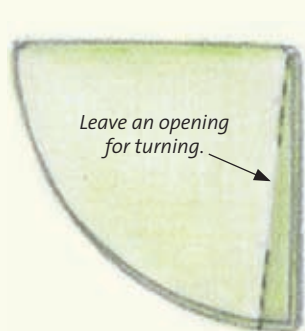
7 After sewing the opening closed, bring the needle down through the inside and back up through the seam at the curved edge. With the seam on the outside, fold the wedge. Bring the needle up ⅜ inch from the center, and tack the two sides together with a few tiny stitches.



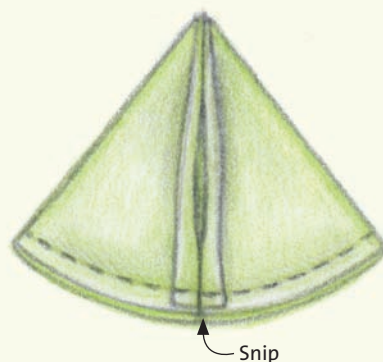
8 Pleat the sides down and then back up again. Make the new folds the same depth as the first fold. Tack the side folds to the central fold. This creates an accordion-folded center section. Fold the ends down, abutting them. Stitch them together from the lower seam to the fold. Manipulate the fold until it's relatively symmetrical.



4 **Stitch the manipulated fabric.** Fold it in half with the straight edges opened out, and stitch along the fold line at the top and bottom, leaving an opening in the center long enough to turn the leaf through.



5 **Press the seam open.** Refold it so the seam matches the snip mark in the center of the curved edge. Pin in place. Stitch a 1/4-inch seam along the curved edge.



9 **Pinch the ends together.** Sew a few invisible stitches to hold everything in place. Repeat for the remaining two leaf shapes. The smaller leaves take fewer pleats.

continued >>>



Shaped bias tubes create an elegant embellishment for a sophisticated dress.



Arrange the embellishment

The embellishment shown is sewn onto a finished garment. A detachable alternative can be made by stitching the sides to 1-inch by 2-inch rectangular pieces of garment fabric and sewing a jewelry pin onto the back.

1 Set two curled tubes aside. With the garment lying flat, place the remaining four tubes from shoulder to shoulder with the curled ends on the right. Bundle the tubes about 3 inches from the curled end.

2 Add one of the reserved tubes. Hold a free tube 4 inches from the curled end, and wrap the remainder twice around the bundle. Use loose enough tension to allow repositioning of the tubes. Pull the bundled tubes gently in either direction so the curled extensions are different lengths. Pin the extensions in place, and pin the bundled area to the garment's right shoulder area.

3 Tack the tubes together. Then tack the unit onto the dress at the right shoulder with discreet stitches.

4 Drape the tubes. Arrange the long ends across the dress in a curve that parallels the neckline.

5 Adjust the arc and spacing. Create a slight separation between the tubes in the center of the curve before touching again as they curve toward the left shoulder. When they reach the shoulder, pin them in place side-by-side and parallel to the neckline. Trim the excess length off the end.

6 Arrange the leaves. Use them to cover the tube ends on the left side. Place the largest leaf first and smallest last. Use the last bias tube as an additional accent by tucking it under a leaf, trimming the length, and curling the end. Tack the underside of the tube and the leaves to the dress with tiny, discreet stitches.

7 Trim the ends. Each shoulder still has one tube with an open end. Trim the ends to a similar length as the extended curled ends. Tuck the raw edges inside, stitch them shut as before, and follow the previous instructions to make a curl.