

# Let's Play Sampler Spree 4

It's getting closer – only three more weeks until we “officially” start sewing. (I might have made a couple of blocks... how about you?)



If you're getting ready for this summer's Sampler Spree QAL, I hope you have this [Sampler Spree](#) book in-hand or on-order. All of the block instructions are in the book.

Trivia question - how many books has Susan authored by herself? Five. Can you name them? (Titles at the bottom.)

Extra points for how many other books include one of Susan's quilts.

We'll share more about the quilting-along plan in another week or so – colors, how many blocks per week, and so on.

Today, we're going to talk about fabric. Building a "stash" you love is a bit like stocking a pantry, there are basics you need to keep replenishing, and items that are nice to have on hand, but might not be used regularly. Fortunately, fabric doesn't have an expiration date!

So I wanted to ask Susan the important shopping questions - how much does she buy? What are her "staples"?



*Pieces from Susan's "low volume with color" stash.*

Having worked together on a few projects in recent years, Susan and I have joked about “blowing up a hashtag” or having a project “go viral”, allowing her to buy an island. With electricity and exceptional WiFi, of course. For sewing. And for shopping.

**So... Susan, how will you know what to buy? In other words, what advice would you give to quilters who don't live near a quilt shop? Or don't live near a shop that suits their style. Is this where charm packs, and even mini charm packs, come into play?**

*Living on an island, waiting for fabric to arrive....the dream! Okay, I can easily show you that ordering online is easy to do if you use charm packs as your guide. The size of the squares truly does show you what the fabric is saying in terms of color, the scale of the print, and even how it plays with others. From there, it's super-easy to pick and choose your favorites.*

*I also pay attention to the designers when they show their picks for solids and near-solids that match their collections the best, and I always order those.*

*I also follow shops on Instagram that make up good color bundles, and assortments. I don't think there has been a time that I passed up a FQ bundle of backgrounds, especially when there is a mix of designers. I also make sure I have current color cards for Bella Solids, Spotted, and every other basic that I use. That's always an easy way to add small amounts of fabric in shades I need for variety.*





**Backgrounds! What do you look for in a background fabric?**

*I prefer to call my backgrounds my “putzy” prints. I love a putzy print that doesn’t scream at you while doing its job as the backup in a quilt block. Yes, I know I just made this into an acting studio but, to me that is what a good “putzy” print does. It acts as the background while your colors in your block do all of the work.*



*There are two types of putzy prints to me and they both are equally as important, ones that read more of a white and ones that read more of a cream. There are quilts that I want it to be on the lighter and brighter side, so I'll use background fabrics that are on a more-white ground. Other color combinations might call for something softer, a creamy, ivory shade. So I collect both.*



*The "whiter" are on the left with a Bella 200 Off-White, and the "creamier" are next to Bella 60 Ivory.*

*And I know you're going to ask so – yes, I also mix them. It depends on what I'm making. It really is all about playing around.*

**You've found backgrounds you want to add to your stash... so how much do you buy of one you "like" and know you'll use? And how much do you get of those you LOVE?**

*Half-yards. And for my favorites, I will buy a yard, and use it sparingly so that I never run out. If you look closely at all of the quilts I've made, I pretty much use the same kinds of putzy prints in all of them. They get freshened up when I add new, and different, prints to that mix.*



*This is Susan's Halloweenish quilt from her book, [Sweater Weather](#).*

**Do you ever buy yardage for borders?**

*Not really. When I make a quilt that needs a border, I go looking for something that will work. That's where solids and small prints work well.*





***Check the Box - Susan's quilt in the coming-in-June book - [Moda All-Stars On A Roll Again](#).***

A lot of your quilts have pieced borders. Seriously? Who does that?

I do! It's mainly out of necessity. Because I don't buy all the fabric for a quilt when it first comes out, by the time I have figured out that I love "that one" large flower print, I can no longer find it. Since I buy most of my fabrics in half-yard cuts, and then make a lot of large quilts, necessity is the key when I get to finishing my quilt.



*Christmas Vacation - included in Susan's book, [Countdown to Christmas](#).*

*Scrappy borders can be fun. I also try really, really hard not to make a pieced border with points on the edges because I don't want to spend all of that time sewing, and then cut off points when it comes time to bind the quilt.*





**Witch Hat** - this quilt is also in Susan's book, [Sweater Weather](#).

*This is one of my favorite borders. It's scrappy, and it makes the quilt. This quilt also shows a mix of the two shades of background I use. And some of these fabrics are in the Halloweenish quilt.*

**Do you ever buy kits of blocks-of-the-month? Have you ever bought one just for the fabric? (Meaning - ONLY for the fabric.)**

*I am the worst with blocks of the month. I buy them because I love them, and I want to play! The first month, I am a solid player. By month two, I have given myself permission to wait until month 3 to catch up. Do you see where this is going? LOL. One of two things always happens – I either wait until the very end and crack out my quilt all at once, or I never finish, and the parts of that BOM go into other projects.*

*But put this part in super, tiny, little writing... yes, I buy kits just for the fabric. Especially if the kit is super-scrappy. It loads up my stash in colors that I am always on the hunt for. Yes, I sometimes feel guilty about doing that, but finding my perfect colors and fabrics in one kit always outweighs that. After all, I'm still buying the fabric!*





**Any final thoughts? About fabric, inspiration, playing?**

*It's always about playing, and having fun. When I buy bundles and pre-cuts, I don't love every print, or even every color. Even curated bundles from shops often have a print or two that isn't something I would buy separately. But I know I'll use it, that's the best thing about scrap quilts, and playing. Just don't be surprised when that piece of fabric you didn't like becomes your favorite part of a block.*

And if there is anything you want to ask Susan - leave a comment and I'll ask!

Five. That's how many solo books Susan has authored. They are: [Start with Strips: 13 Colorful Quilts from 2½" Strips](#) - [Quilt by Color: Scrappy Quilts With A Plan](#) - [Sweater Weather: Eight Cozy Chill-in-the-Air Quilts](#) - [Countdown to Christmas: Quilts & More That Span the Seasons](#) - and [Sampler Spree](#).

Bonus answer? At least thirteen. Five Moda All-Stars books: [Scraps Made Simple](#) - [Two, Four, Six, Eight](#) - [Mix It Up!](#) - [Top the Table](#) - [On A Roll Again](#). Six compilation books: [Red & White](#)

[Quilts](#) - [Red & Green Quilts](#) - [The Big Book of Lap Quilts](#) - [The Splendid Sampler 2](#) - I Love Nine-Patches - I Love Log Cabins. And Lissa Alexander's [Sisterhood of Scraps](#) and [Scrap School](#).

Have a terrific Wednesday - I hope you get to play with fabric today.

If you missed any of the earlier posts with Susan:

- [Let's Play Sampler Spree 3](#) - *Inspiration*
- [Let's Play Sampler Spree 2](#) - *Tips & Playing*
- [Let's Play Sampler Spree 1](#) - *Orphan Blocks & Scraps*
- [Let's Make A Sampler](#) - *Intro*

**Images by Susan Ache and Martingale.**