

## Manual:

# Traditional paper flowers from Ostrobothnia

This manual introduces traditional paper flowers from Ostrobothnia, the concept of pop up workshop, as well as suggestions how handmade flowers or wedding decorations can be used as a means to safeguard intangible cultural heritage.



## Historic use of paper flowers in Ostrobothnia

At the end of the 19th century it was common to craft paper decorations for festive occasions in the Nordic countries. It was popular to combine colourful papers with shining materials. The decorations could be used e.g. as Christmas decorations, during Mayday spring celebrations and for confectioneries at funerals. In Ostrobothnia, on the Finnish west coast, weddings were the biggest celebrations that were arranged, and paper decorations were used to make them extra festive.

When looking into the Ostrobothnian traditions of paper flowers, we found that many different models were used during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. We chose to work with two different models, “spiiiror” (“sceptres”) made out of silk paper in the south of the region, and “jessbåsblommår” (“feast flowers”) made out of crepe paper in the north of the region. This manual contains detailed instructions for crafting “spiiiror”. Many versions of the decorations have been used, and we chose to create a collection of historical photos to showcase a selection of them.

Why were paper flowers used traditionally? The Ostrobothnian custom was to arrange huge wedding celebrations during three consecutive days in summer time. Extensive decorations were used, and centre stage was the huge, heavily decorated crown of the bride. Paper flowers will last longer than actual flowers during such circumstances. Also, back in those days gardens with flower beds were uncommon. Opting for paper flowers, it was possible to create big amounts of similar looking flowers in the preferred bright colours. Additionally, store bought goods such as paper tended to be viewed as a bit of luxury – something that would have been appealing during a wedding.

The customs varied. In the south, mainly the bridal party (the bride and groom as well as their assistants) as well as the chamber where the wedding took place were decorated with paper flowers. The high crown of the bride and her dress was embellished with flowers. For the groom several paper flowers were sewn together and fastened on the lapel of his coat. The ceiling was decorated with “wedding skies” made out of tasselled sheets, silk table cloths and shawls – and the centre of each held a couple of joined paper flowers. Today the huge traditional weddings are commemorated through staged wedding parties with uneven intervals.

In the north of the region, we have heard of weddings where paper flowers were used as late as 1983. The big crown and the dress of the bride were decorated, as well as the coat of the groom. Here it was also common that all invited wedding guests wore paper flowers. It was customary to view weddings as events open to everyone, at least in the evenings after the meals. The paper flowers thus became a marker to show who was

invited and who was just there to “view the bride” and join the party. Another custom was that the bridal couple would sell paper flowers to their guests during the reception. This was a means collect some money for them. But it could also be interpreted as untoward begging, so you needed to know your way around the customs.

## Paper flowers to showcase traditions

Crafting traditional paper flowers is a good way to bring attention to wedding traditions. We collaborated with local association in order to create a concept for “pop up workshops”, Please see the description below! We set up a stand decorated with paper flowers and invited visitors to craft their own. This creates a festive atmosphere, as the participants want to wear their flowers once ready. Crafting flower is also a good activity to do in groups for the elderly and in groups for integration. It opens up for very rewarding discussions about memories of good parties and of varying customs.

Please note that this manual should be used in connection to historical photos, [please see our example!](#)

Tip!

Contact your local museum to find out what kind of wedding decorations were used traditionally in your area.

Speak to older persons about the setup of traditional celebrations.



## Pop up workshops, how we do it

We tend to arrange a lot of pop up workshops as part of bigger events. These workshops are offered only during a limited space of time and serve on drop in-basis – no sign ups and participants according to interest and resources.

### Why pop up?

To us, pop up signified a relatively short and often a somewhat unexpected activity that can be arranged on a smaller surface. We use low cost materials that can be funded through various projects in order to offer the workshops free of charge.

It is rewarding for visitors to do something practical during events, but long workshops tend to be burdensome for (often volunteering) assistants. At the same time, organizers of courses and workshops have a hard time filling the spots currently. Our solution is to cooperate with existing events and arranging pop up workshops as part of the program – or why not several of them with different themes – during a limited amount of time.

### Step one: design your pop up workshop

-Who will you collaborate with? Where and when? What will be your activity? Who will assist at the workshop, what skill-set is needed?

## Step two: plan the activities

- How will you illustrate the process for the participants, which materials to use, which work surfaces and tools, what instructions do the participants need, which and how many languages will you instruct in, will specific patterns, motives or models be used?

## Step three: do a test run

- Have some volunteers outside the planning group test your setup and evaluate the results! What did the test group think about the set up?
- Note approximate use of time per participant. From what age is this activity suitable?
- What bottlenecks did you notice, what can you do to avoid or lessen their impact on the process?
- How many assistants are needed, can you give them specific roles in the process? Does (parts of) the activity need to be simplified for a better work flow?
- How many participants can do the activity at once?

## Step 4: signs and visibility

- Clear and informative signs is important for the participants to understand the setup of the workshop and the target group. Our aim is that a visitor with no previous knowledge of the setup should be able to find sufficient information without speaking to anyone.
- Where can your information signs be placed? If you are part of a bigger event, it would be helpful with several clearly visible signs to help the visitors find and notice you.
- What, who (name the organizer and leader of the workshop, also pinpoint who is the intended participant), where, when (include both opening hours and estimated time usage), price

## Our experiences: Crafting "spiior"

How: crafting "spiior" as pop up workshops

Material: red silk paper, gold coloured metal foil, safety pins

Equipment: templates, scissors, sewing needles and tread, multiple paper bins/trash bags. Knitting needles can be used to roll up the metal foil. Historical photos.

Price for participants: free

Time per participant: 10 minutes

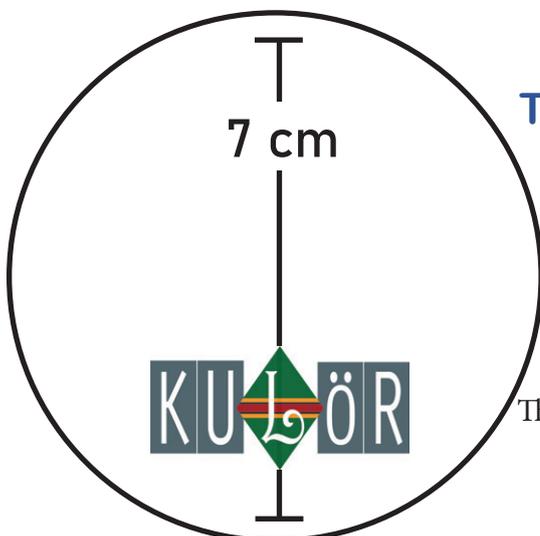
Degree of difficulty: easy

Target group: children interested in crafts and grown ups that want a token of celebration.

Assistants: one person is able to assist three participants at once. Limit the number of templates accordingly.

Bottlenecks in the process: the trickiest bit is to sew the flowers.

Bonus tip: the look of the end result can vary quite a bit depending on how you fold or fluff the "spiior" once they are sewn together.



## Templates for crafting "spiior"



The templates were designed as part of Leader-financed project Kulör.

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 Nordplus

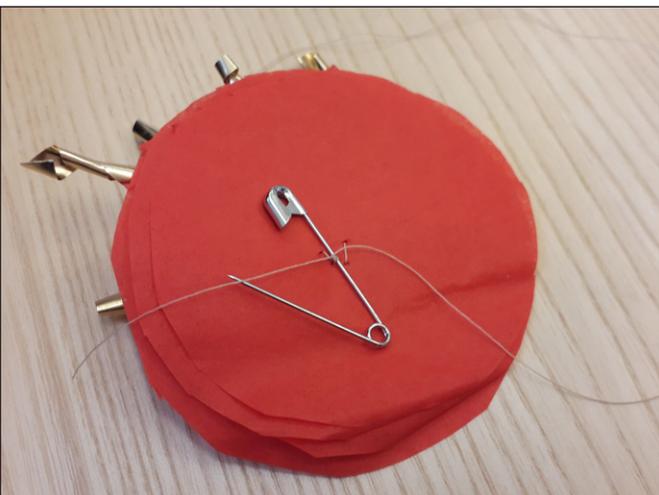


## How to do it: “Spiiror” from southern Ostrobothnia

1. Craft some templets according to the models on the previous page. You will need silk paper, red is the traditional colour and some kind of craft friendly metal foil that is good for cutting. Place historic photos of the traditional use of the paper flowers on your work surface, so that you can illustrate the during the work process. Also, accompanying bystanders will start looking at the pictures and discussing the tradition – very rewarding!



3. Roll up the metal foil in order to curl the fringes – you can use e.g. a knitting needle or just twist them into corkscrew curls using your fingers. Fold up the edges of the uncut end until it feels steady. Then sew the metal foil onto the middle of the paper circles with a couple of stitches and thread in a suitable colour.



5. Fold or fluff the paper to give your paper flower the desired look. Historic “spiiror” have small folds around the outer edge of the paper. However, in living tradition in southern Ostrobothnia, a fluffy look is preferred – scrunch up one layer of paper at a time and arrange them into a rose-like result. Now your paper flower is done, attach it to your top as a brooch!



2. Cut about six circles of silk paper. The end result will look nice even if the circles are not perfect or identical. Cut a rectangle of metal foil. Cut along the dotted lines, but stop 2–3 cm from one end.



4. Tie a safety pin to the back of the flower using the same thread. We tend to twirl the thread around the unmoving side of the safety pin a couple of time before tying a couple of knots in order to stabilize it a bit.

