



HOW TO CREATE A

# TRAILING

*Surface Pattern Design*

[www.melaniestimmell.com](http://www.melaniestimmell.com)



"Upon your shattered ruins  
where this vine will flourish still,  
as rare, as fresh,  
as fragrant as of old.  
Love will not crumble."

 Eleanor Farjeon





# HOW TO CREATE A TRAILING Surface Pattern Design

I love trailing vine patterns but they can be a little tricky to create. So I've put together a step by step to help, especially if this is your first. Here are a few of my vines as examples.





A Post-it is like duct tape. It has so many uses.

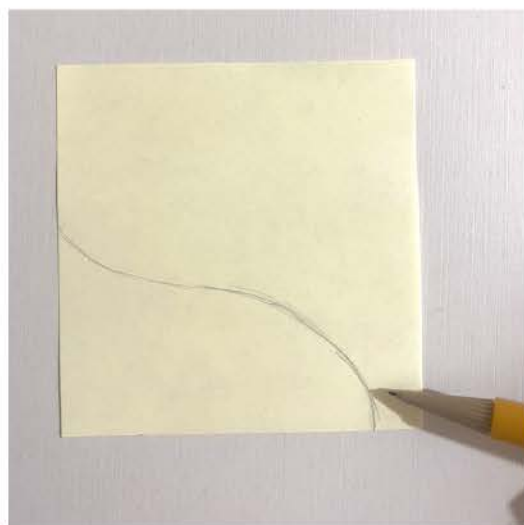


### *What you need...*

**Post-it's** - I like to use yellow because they are the easiest to see through when stacked.

**Pencil** - Mechanical pencils are my favorite because they are forever sharp :)

**Adobe Illustrator** - and a basic knowledge of pattern creation within the program.



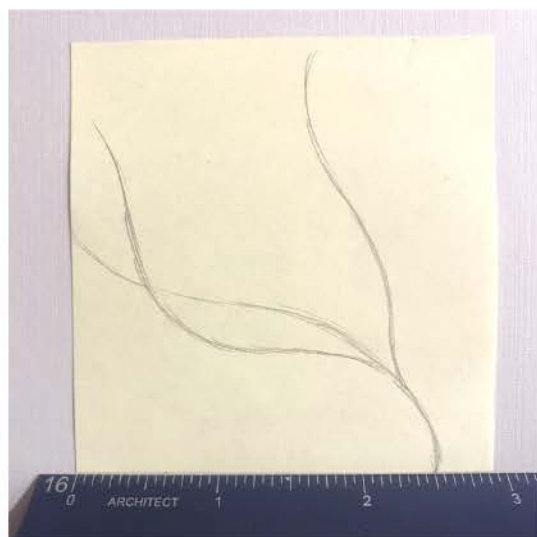
### *Step 1*

Starting with a single post-it, draw a curve. This can be a simple S curve from top to bottom of post-it, or it can run off the side like I've done here. It's just a starting point so don't worry too much. I like to make sure that at my curve runs off the bottom of my post-it.



### *Step 2*

Continue creating your vine with branches that extend beyond the main branch. I'm creating a very curvy vine here but you can create something more straight or angled. Just play with your vine until you're happy with it's initial shape.



### Step 3

Measure where your vine falls off the post-it and mark the same measurement on the opposite side. So here I'm measuring where my vine meets the bottom of the post-it, about 2.5 inches.



### Step 4

I measured the 2.5 inches at the top and create a natural curve to meet my vine. Now that your top and bottom match, you can finish adding little branches or main details.



### Step 5

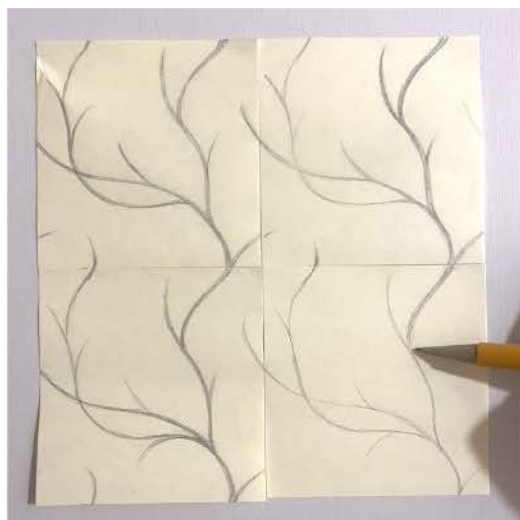
Now the fun part!! Stack a second post-it on top of your first and trace your vine shape. I try to be as exact as you can.





## Step 6

Now place your two post-its so your main vine (the one that you measured) lines up perfectly between the two post-its. In this photo, it's top to bottom. Now you can decide which branches should be thicker, or thinner. You may even adjust some for a more natural shape. The key is - whatever you change to one, has to change in the other. So I keep stacking and tracing between the two until they are exactly the same.



## Step 7

It's time to trace 1 or 2 more post-its so you can make sure your vine is flowing from one to the other in a pleasing way.



I like to play with the configuration of my post-it's to double check that everything matches up, including any of the little branches that extend from one post-it to the other. Now you can start to visualize what your pattern will look like.

If you do not yet have a theme for your trailing pattern, you can perhaps begin to visualize what will work on the vine you've created. The options are endless. I try not to limit my vines to flowers.





## Step 8

Thinking of my post-it as an Artboard, I like to set them up so I create a complete vine, this includes any branches that extend onto other post-its. Then I outline in a fine black felt tip. Notice I stop where my main branch hits the top and bottom of the post-it. This is where your repeats will meet.



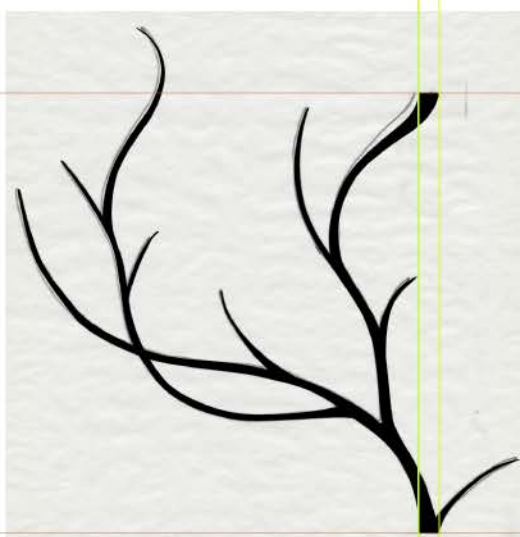
## Optional

I sometimes scan and enlarge my vine onto vellum or tracing paper, especially if I want to add little details and texture. I then bring it into Adobe Illustrator.

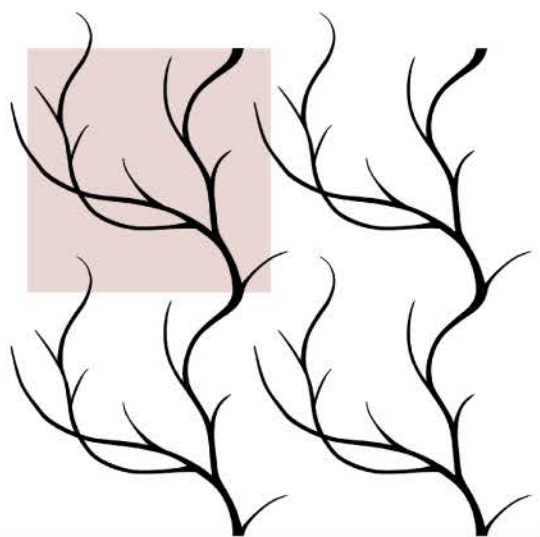
## Step 9

There are a few different ways to now vectorize your vine in Illustrator. You can image trace, especially, if you have nice drawn details that you want to retain. You can use the blob brush to draw it in, or, you can use your pen tool, like I have here, to create a smooth, solid shape.

\*Whatever method you use, *Guides* in Illustrator can help you line up your vine (notice the green and red lines). This will help ensure you draw the main vine so that it will connect perfectly.



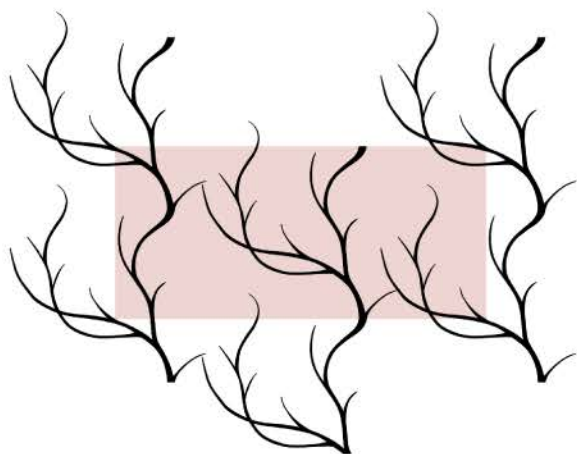




## Step 10

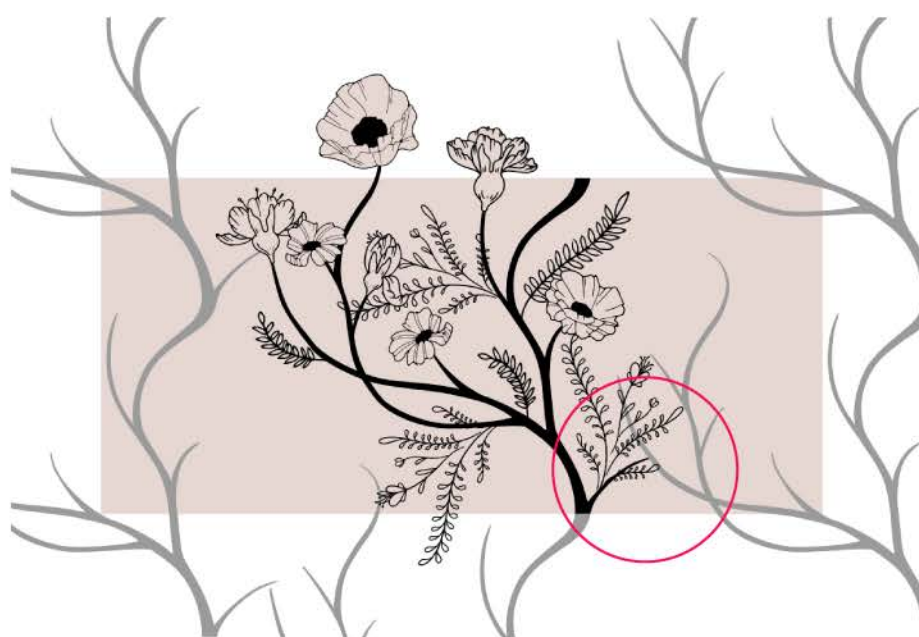
### Straight Pattern:

If you decide on a straight repeat, start by creating your background square so it fits your drawing just as it did on the post-it. Your vine is now ready for adornments. But first, I like to double check that my vine will like up perfectly. Here I have 4 panels lined up.



### Half Drop:

For a half drop pattern, you'll want to almost double the width of your background bounding box so two rows of vines fit. I like to place my original in the center then build my half drop on one side, then duplicating to the other side.



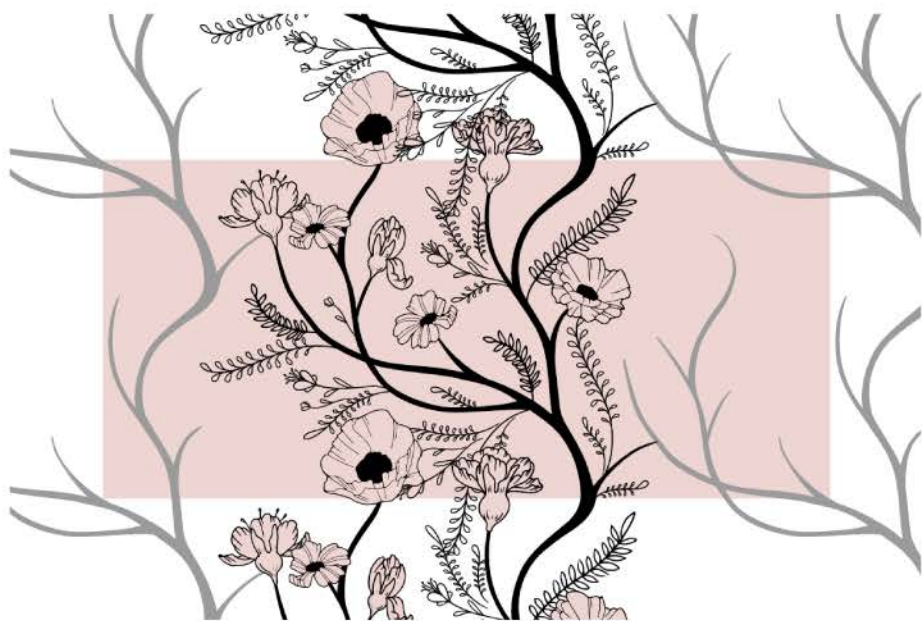
## Step 11

I like to place my outer vines on a separate layer and lock them. Now you can begin placing your motifs on your original vine. The nice thing about having your additional vines still visible is that you can see where things will overlap like the area I've circled.

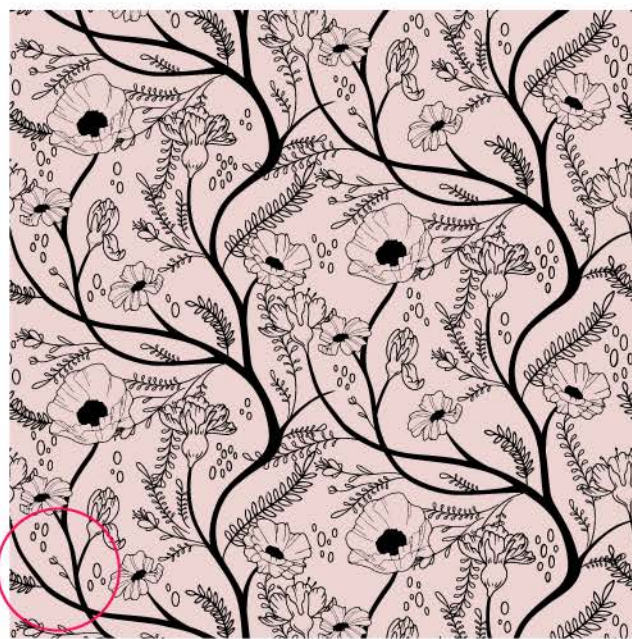
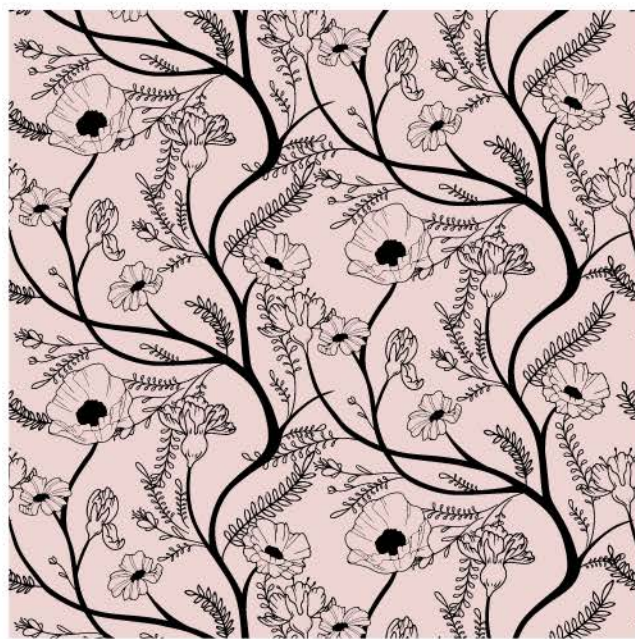


## Step 12

I've grouped my motifs and original vine together and duplicated top and bottom as you would for any repeat in illustrator. Now I can make the decision to either move, or remove certain elements.



You can also change how each vine layers over one another. For instance, my top vine should be layered beneath my original in the top image.



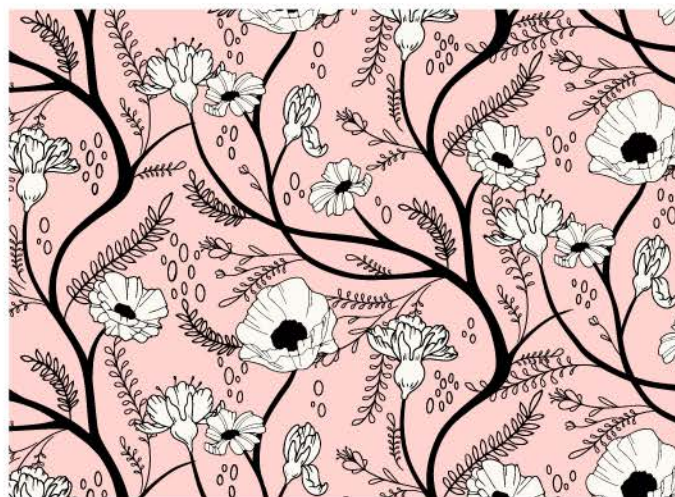
\*You can remove any portions of your motif from your main bounding box that make your elements appear too crowded.

\*You can also add small details to fill in the gaps (fillers) if you'd like a more dense pattern. Of course, I kept this pattern monochromatic but making any filler motifs (like the spots circled in red) more subtle in color, will keep your pattern from looking too busy.



# Finishing your Trailing Pattern

I've changed the background color of my pattern for more interest below. Of course, I would normally color the leaves and flowers before adding them to my vine in step 11 but I like the simplicity of the pattern below, especially for this demonstration.



There is something in the rhythm and harmony of a trailing pattern that really draws me in. Something very hopeful that I love. The process I've demonstrated is my favorite - Even though it may seem like many steps, it's actually quite easy, and fun, once you get the hang of it.





Creator of Whimsical Art and Patterns to Decorate Your World



*Thank you for joining me...*

I hope you've enjoyed creating a Trailing Surface Pattern Design with me. Remember, your trailing pattern doesn't have to be a floral. Once you have mastered the technique, the possibilities are really endless.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have and would love to see the trailing pattern you create. Please share on Instagram and tag me @melaniesvl so that I can comment and like



Until then, happy pattern making.

XOXO  
*Melanie Stimmell*

*Let's meet on Instagram and Facebook*

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