Ruby Slipper Glass Mosaic Planter

Design, Fabrication, and Text by Carol Champion

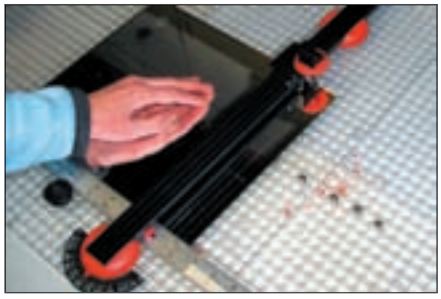
When warm weather comes, my thoughts turn toward my flowers, and I'm always looking for that perfect, unique planter in which to display them. One day it struck me that the quintessential symbol for the *Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy's ruby slipper, would make a great showcase for my beautiful blooms. This project is the culmination of that idea. Lots of people have asked me how this planter came about, so I thought I would share the steps for making it.

To begin, I bought a high-heeled shoe and applied a two-part resin to the shoe to stiffen it. I recommend a suedelike material rather than patent leather, since the resin will absorb more into the shoe. The shoe must be stiff, because if it bends the grout will crack and the tiles will pop off.

Preparing and Setting the Glass

Step 1

Begin by scoring the glass.

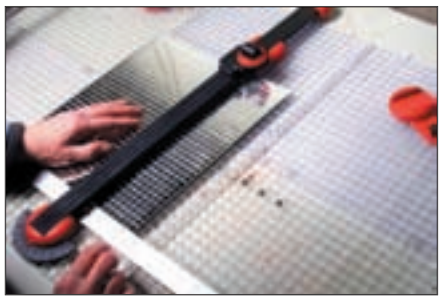


I use the Beetle Bits cutting system, because I believe it is easier, faster, and more accurate than any of the other cutting systems I have tried. Begin with the regular mirrored glass and make a straight score with the Flying Beetle Bits glass cutter. Slide the glass in 3/8" increments until all the glass is scored. The Beetle Bits cutter is automatically set at a 90-degree angle and only takes a little bit of pressure to press the button and score the glass while sliding down the bar.

Spectrum Glass Company Silver Coats
151 Water, 1-1/2 Sq Ft.
Other Glass Required
Mirror Glass, 1-1/2 Sq. Ft.
Tools and Materials
Beetle Bits Cutting System Mosaic Wheeled Nippers
Latex Gloves Particle Mask Gray Grout
Scotch-Brite™ Heavy Duty Scouring Pads
GE II Window & Door Caulking in Clear
Caulking Gun TileLab® Sealer Glass Cutter
Running Pliers Popsicle sticks Paper plates
Clear Spray Paint Clear Nail Polish
Twinkles Brush On Glitter Paint Paint Brush

Step 2

Turn the glass 90 degrees and make straight scores, sliding the glass in 3/8" increments until the whole sheet is scored.



Toward the end of the sheet only move the glass in 1/4" increments. You will be applying mosaic pieces to a three-dimensional object and will need some offcuts to complete the shoe. It is bad to do a score directly over another score, but the mirror glass is an exception because the glass won't break if scored on the mirror backing.

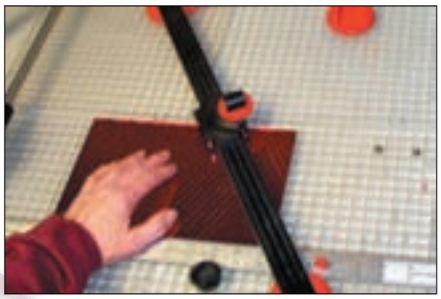
Step 3

Make 3/8" diamonds from the red mirrored glass.

Set the compass at a 60-degree angle and use a tadpole to lock the bar in place. Score the glass by sliding the cutter down the bar. Slide the glass in 3/8" increments until you have scored the whole sheet.

Step 4

Move the bar to the other 60-degree angle and score the sheet of glass, again sliding the glass in 3/8" increments.



Can this get any easier?

Step 5

Make some triangles from the diamonds, because you will need some offcuts.

On the Flying Beetle Bits glass cutter, there is a small yellow arrow that shows you where the score is going to be made so you can line up where you want to score. You can find a tutorial at home.comcast.net/~carolchampion/beetle_bits.htm that I developed for using the Beetle Bits System.

The diamond sheets are now scored, and you are ready to run the glass. This is the only cutting system that I know of that allows you to do this, thus making it a perfect cutting tool for mosaics. You will also take a 3" x 5" piece of red mirrored glass and make 1/4" x 3/8" scores for some rectangular offcuts.

Step 6

Seal the tiles.

Line a cookie sheet with paper towels and sprinkle some water on the towels. Since the mirror has been cut into tiles, they must be sealed to eliminate any black spots from moisture getting under the mirror backing. Wet paper towels will help hold on to the mirrored glass while you are spraying it and will keep the tiles from turning over. Seal the tiles with clear acrylic spray paint.

Step 7

Use GE II Silicone Window & Door Caulk for the glue, since it is weatherproof and waterproof.

This shoe is going to be a planter for outside, so it will need some protection. Draw a line at the center of the shoe. Then squirt a small amount of caulking onto a paper plate and use a Popsicle stick to apply the caulking to the tiles. Be sure to have an old wet towel to wipe your hands as you go, because it is very sticky and the tiles are very small.

Step 8

Attach the glass diamonds to the shoe.

Start at the center of the shoe with a line of diamonds, which will act as your plumb line. Continue placing the diamonds next to each other as closely as possible. The grout lines should be very small for this project, because the goal is to make it look like leather.

Step 9

Finish the front part of the shoe as far as you can go using whole diamonds.

Continue following the form of the shoe and glue as many diamonds as you can around the top part of the shoe.

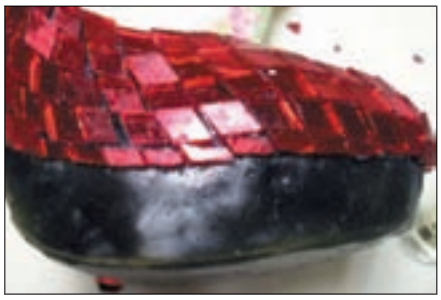
Step 10

After you have finished using all the whole diamonds, continue to fill in areas with triangles and offcuts.

You can use wheeled nippers to make offcuts for the shoe to fill any empty spots. Seal any cuts that you make with clear nail polish before gluing.

Step 11

Follow the form and pattern of the shoe with the glass cuts.



The caulking does not take long to dry, but it will take a few sittings to finish the shoe. If some caulking has dried where you want to place a piece of glass, use an X-acto knife to cut the caulking off of the shoe.

One part of the shoe that is more difficult than some of the others is the toe. Diamonds are pointy, and the front of the shoe has a very hard curve. Also, the diamonds do not bend. The only solution is to use triangles. You won't see the bottom much because of the curve, but you don't want grout showing there, either.

Step 12

Use the line at the center back of the shoe to form a seam.

When you get to the back of the shoe, the diamonds on each side will be facing each other. Try to make the seam as realistic as possible.

Step 13

Cover the rest of the shoe with the mirror tiles.

The rest of the shoe will be made in the 3/8" silvered mirror tiles, which really set off the shoe. Start at the outside of the shoe at the base of the heel and continue upward. The key here is to keep everything lined up evenly. Cut glass with wheeled nippers to fit in any holes that aren't quite square. If the edges don't come out even, use a grinder to smooth them.

Step 14

Use the silvered mirror squares to do the inside of the shoe and as far into the toe of the shoe as you can.

Take the 1/4" x 3/8" offcuts with the red mirrored glass that were previously made and line the rim of the shoe with them.

Step 15

Add a bow to complete the shoe.

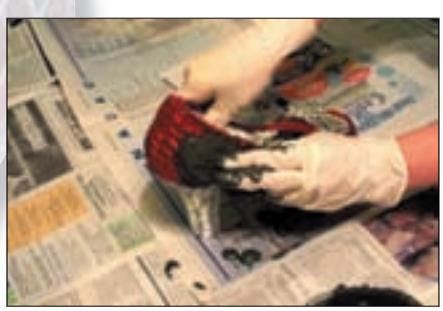
I cut the form for the bow shape from plastic, but you could also use Styrofoam or anything that doesn't bend. Use silvered mirror tiles for the bow. Make the top of the bow using a Cutter's Mate. Place the 3/8" mirrored squares around the edges. Then glue the bow to the shoe and let it set up overnight.

Grouting

If you liked playing in the mud as a child, this next step is great. Because the grout contains portland cement, you should *always* wear a respirator when mixing the grout. Also avoid prolonged skin contact by wearing latex gloves and be sure to wear eye protection.

Step 16

Prepare the grout and apply to the shoe.



Mix 2 to 4 tablespoons of water to each 1/2 cup of dry grout and mix to the consistency of brownie batter. The grout should have enough body that it doesn't ooze, but it should not be so dry that it is crumbly or hard to press into spaces between glass pieces. Add more water for a thinner consistency or more dry grout to thicken the mixture. I used 1-1/2 cups of grout.

Wearing latex gloves, place the mixed grout in the middle of the shoe and spread it to cover, working it in to fill the space between the glass pieces. You can remove excess grout from the top of the glass with your hand. Be sure to not dip into the grout line. Then use a paper towel to buff off the thin layer of dried-up grout that is left on the glass. To loosen any remaining grout, use a damp paper towel or sponge.

Let the grout cure for 2 days and then seal the shoe. Spray the sealant on the shoe and wait 5 minutes for the sealer to penetrate. Then thoroughly wipe the glass clean with a soft cloth. This sealer is good for any projects that are made to be used outside or are damp from contact with dirt. The sealant lasts on inside projects for twenty years. I plan on sealing my outside projects every spring. If it absorbs any of the sealant, it needed it. Scrub the shoe with Scotch-Brite scouring pads to rid the glass tiles of the caulking glue. This may take a couple of scouring pads.

To add a little more bling to the shoe, I did a wash with glitter paint. Mix a two-ounce bottle of glitter paint with one ounce of

water and paint the shoe. Then with a damp towel, wipe off the shoe until the tiles are clean. The glitter paint will adhere to the grout. You can only use the glitter paint if the shoe is not exposed to the weather (under a covered porch, for example), because the rain will wash it off. **GPQ**

Carol Champion, designer of what she lovingly refers to as "The Ruby Slipper on steroids," is a homemaker and self-employed designer of Christian websites. In 2005 Carol discovered the world of glass mosaics and in 2007 fell in love with stained glass, too. She has since become involved with other mosaicists in developing an Internet forum where they can exchange techniques and ideas. This forum, mosaicandstainedglass.org, is open to anyone who is interested in sharing with other amateur glass artists.