

stitch pro { SHAPED BEADS } *Jean Campbell*

I remember visiting my first “real” bead shop. It was 1985 or so, and there were lots of shell, wood, and pressed-glass beads; a few stones; and a smattering of African trade and metal beads. In a basket in the corner was a selection of short tubes of Czech seed beads in a few opaque colors.

Oh my, have bead shops changed since then! As a beadworker, the change I’m most excited about is the huge selection of seed beads available to us now—not just the wide variety of seed bead colors, but seed bead shapes. Here are a handful of the new shape styles that have us stitchers going wild.

PEANUT BEADS

Nicknamed for their hourglass shape, these seed beads are also known as “berry” or “farfalle” (Italian for “butterflies”) beads. These colorful names come from the bead’s look, like two tiny balls of glass melded together with a hole punched where the two rounds meet. Currently they come in two sizes: 4×2mm (from both Japan and the Czech Republic) and 6.5×3.2mm (Czech).

You can use these beads for any type of stitch that you’d use a traditional round seed bead. The difference is the rich texture and thickness that the beads lend.



TWO-HOLE SEED BEADS

These beads are football-shaped with one hole at each end. Measuring at 5×2mm, they are about the same size of three size 11” beads stuck together, but with their thin ends and bulky center, they take on a completely different flavor than any other bead, almost like a spacer bar. They look fabulous when stitched simply with flat peyote stitch, but also work well with complicated Russian netting and other intricate stitches.

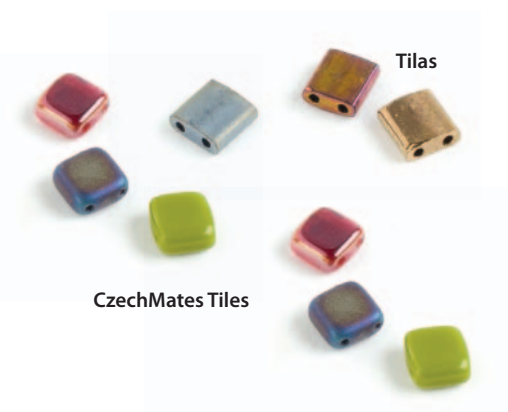
These beads are available in the United States as “Twins” and “Super Duos.” Both are made in the Czech Republic and are generally the same size and shape (Super Duos are a little fatter around the middle), but you’ll need to cull more misshapen beads from a package of Twins than a package of Super Duos.



TWO-HOLE TILE BEADS

One of the biggest splashes in the beadworking world over the last couple years has been the introduction of two-hole tile beads. These flat, square 5mm beads work beautifully for forming smooth bands of peyote and brick stitch, but also work great as bases for intricate netted patterns.

The Japanese version of these beads is called “Tila” (tee-lah). They have crisp edges, even sides, and are fairly consistent from bead to bead. The Czech version is called “CzechMates Tiles.” They have rounded edges, and since they’re quite a bit thicker than their Japanese cousins, they aren’t as prone to breakage.



LONG MAGATAMAS

These beads, which measure 4×7×3mm, are a lengthened version of our favorite drop or magatama beads. They are different because of their unique shape: When looking at them face-on, you'll see an oval with a wide hole sitting near one end. Looking at it from the side, you'll see a leaning rectangle with crisp edges. These pretty beads work great for embellishment, but also are lovely stitched tightly together in brick or peyote stitch to make a dragon-scale look.



SPIKES

I've added these new conical Czech-made beads to this list because they are so tiny and, well, pretty fantastic. Because they're only 5mm at the base and the hole is quite near the base, they can easily be stitched together. You'll just want to make sure their 7mm tall spikes all sit on the same side of the work. I think we're going to see some pretty innovative beadwork incorporating spikes in the years ahead! Larger sizes are available.



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