

Raffia Craft

By Adele Wyman

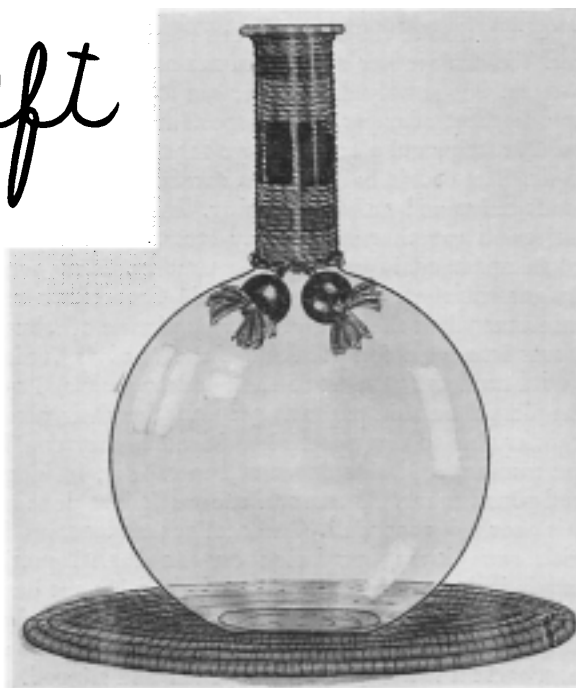
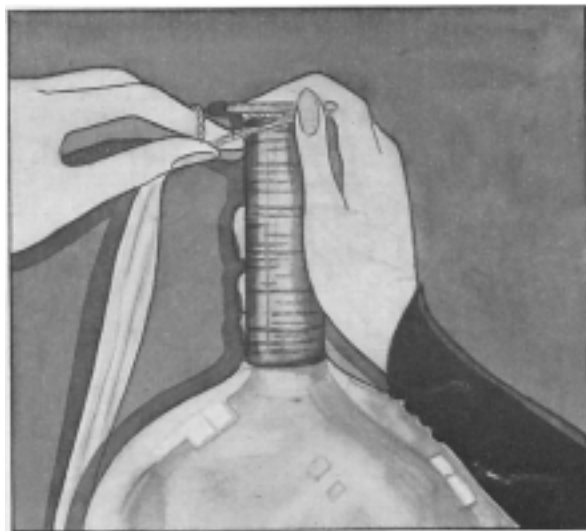
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALICE HARPER

NIMBLE-FINGERED women with time on their hands are always looking for something new to do. When petit point and patch-piecing have begun to pall, raffia craft should look good! Crisp raffia is nice to handle, not hard on the eyes, and adapts to the production of a variety of smart modern articles. To mention briefly: embellishment for pyrex coffee bottles, place mats, hot pads, napkin rings, and cases of odd shapes and kinds.

Raffia is a palm fibre imported from the island of Madagascar. It may be obtained in the natural and is easily and economically dyed at home, though ready-dyed varieties are available and feature fascinating colors. Kindergarten supply houses and most department stores have it; some florists also.

Raffia has a "modern" quality about it. Whether you weave it, crochet it or twist it for wrapping, with just a little talent you will achieve something charming!

Hot beverage bottles are wrapped in raffia for two reasons: to protect the hands, when pouring, from the heat held in the specially tempered glass,

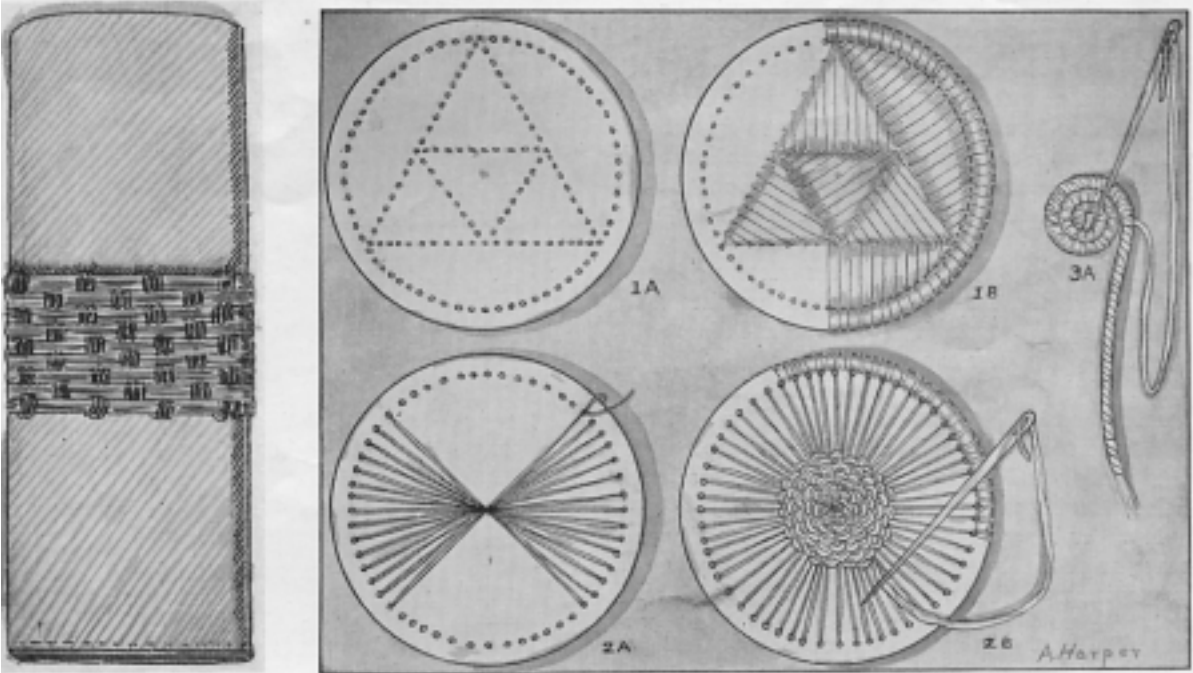
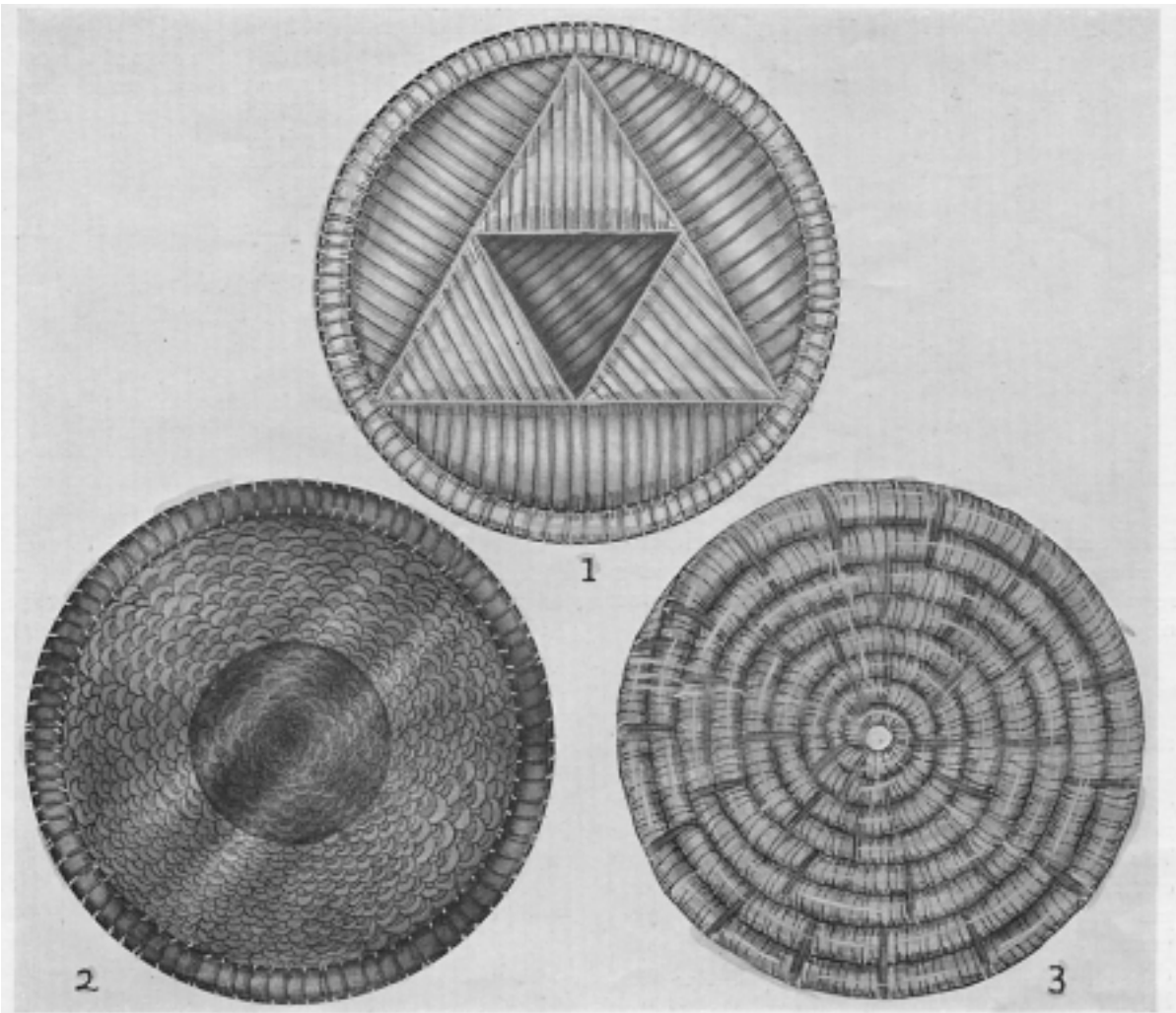


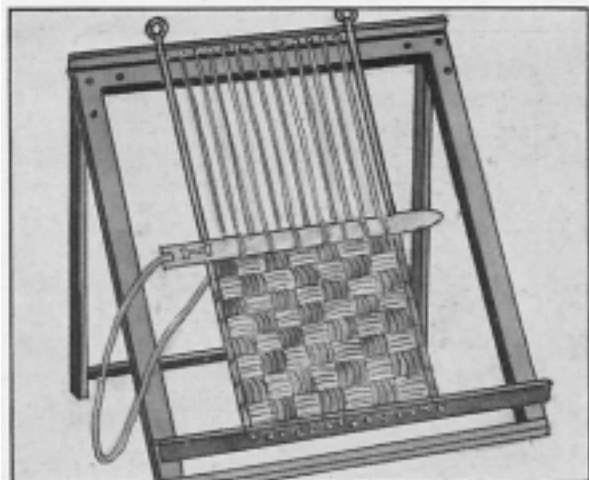
and to achieve a more decorative accessory for informal serving. In binding the neck of a pyrex coffee bottle (a chemist's beaker), the first step is to wrap the neck smoothly from top to bottom with a length of raffia that has been dampened and spread flat like a ribbon. Secure the end at the bottom of the neck with glue. This thin foundation will be sufficient to keep the "overlay" of twisted raffia from slipping as it would if applied to the plain glass. Have cup of water handy for occasional dipping of fingers in next steps.

In applying the overlay, start at the top again. Hold the end of a raffia strip firmly to the bottle with the thumb of the right hand, as the sketch indicates. Twist the raffia tightly with the fingers of the left hand, turning the bottle as required to wrap close, even rows. Push up with the fingers occasionally to effect smooth tightness. When the end of a raffia strip has been reached, stick down firmly with glue. Naturally, interesting stripe arrangements can be achieved by starting new colors.

When the base of the neck has been reached, take pains to fasten the raffia end extra firmly. Then braid two or three colors of raffia together to effect a girdle which may be snugly bound around the base to further protect against unraveling. This braided band may be finished at the ends with painted wooden beads. As a final step, apply two or three coats of shellac to the raffia for glistening finish.

A simple basket-weave in raffia creates an interesting napkin ring. To make, wrap a warp of





fairly coarse raffia around the length of a stiff card. Weave woof of contrasting color under and over in regular basket weave — pulling tight for firmer ring. Complete on back of card as on front.

MAT DIRECTIONS

There are three varieties of clever round mats that may be made of raffia:

Number One: Shows an interesting contrast of design shapes and colors, modern in effect. The working sketches pertinent to this are 1a and 1b. The first of these (1a) shows the foundation, a circle of cardboard with small holes meticulously punched at even distances apart. Just so your punching is done accurately, you may make variations of the triangle pattern as fancy suits. Sketch 1b shows the mat partially worked. Notice how contrast in weave is effected. In some sections raffia is pulled up through one hole across the card and down the hole directly below it on the card, to produce a straight vertical line. In other sections, the raffia is threaded diagonally across from holes lying opposite each other. It will be seen from this that each punched hole counts importantly in the pattern. A special needle, firm and slender, and having a long eye is essential.

When the top of the card is completely covered, the back will simply show short stitches from hole to hole, and, if the work has been neatly done, no roughness except where knots have been tied for joining new ends of raffia. Now to effect a firmer mat and a more attractive finish for the back, the same pattern in raffia may be threaded across the various design sections, the short stitches being used for foundation.

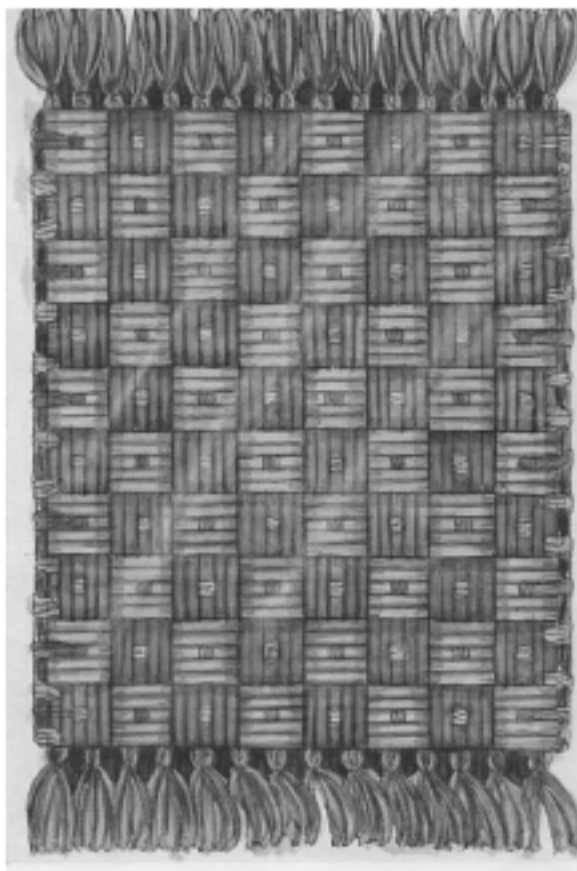
Number Two: Shows the simple kind of raffia mat you probably once made in school. If you did, you will remember the circle of cardboard with holes punched at even distances apart, as in sketch 2a. Then you also remember how the warp was

threaded. Use raffia. Thread one end through a hole in the loom and tie it to the edge of the cardboard. Then bring across the card to the hole opposite on the circle. Down through that and up through the next hole. Across the card, etc. Over and over. Front of the loom, then back, till both sides of the card have been covered with spiral warps, the raffia thread ending at the starting point and being knotted there.

Use a tape needle for simple under-and-over weaving, joining raffia ends so that knots will not be revealed on the top side. Change colors for pattern, if you like. Complete one side, then turn card and work the other side. Finish edge with "overhand" of raffia, in same or contrasting color.

Number Three: Shows Indian form of mat-making. Cotton cording is necessary for this. Have raffia threaded on needle and wrap cord tightly with raffia. Turn raffia-covered cording in spiral shape to form center of mat, and secure the form with stitches from the needle. That is all there is to this: Wrap cord, curve into circle and stitch with the same raffia you have on your needle, continuing until mat attains size desired. Sketch 3a may be helpful in visualizing steps. In this, as

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(Continued from page 22)

in the other two mats, colors may be changed to achieve engaging patterns.

THE RECTANGULAR PLACE MAT

A loom with an easel support (the Todd adjustable hand loom) is necessary for the perfection of a place mat constructed of raffia. The upper left-hand sketch on page 22 shows such a loom with mat in stage of construction on it.

Various attachments insure perfect regulation to the size mat one desires to make. The headpiece can be let down to regulate length, and the side rods moved inward to regulate width. The latter are important in effecting straight mat edges, the woof threads being passed around them as weaving progresses.

A similar contrivance can be made at home, care being taken with measurements so that warp may be threaded absolutely straight and taut.

For a raffia mat, use a warp of raffia, fairly coarse, and strung rather closely for firmness.

In the creation of a simple kindergarten pattern such as the finished place mat on page 22 illustrates, the woof threads determine the color effect. Use a tape needle for weaving. For fringed edge, stop weaving within an inch of ends of warp threads. When work is removed from loom, mat edges may be pressed flat with warm iron.

ANNOUNCEMENT

of the Penland Weaving Institute

EDWARD F. WORST, well-known authority on hand weaving and author of *Foot Power Loom Weaving* and *How to Weave Linens*, will conduct the fourth annual Weaving Institute at Penland in Western North Carolina from August 14th to 25th inclusive. This interesting project is sponsored by the Penland Weavers and Potters under the direction of Miss Lucy Morgan. The course is designed to offer to students and teachers of hand weaving an intensive, but thorough study of all the phases of foot power loom weaving, with special emphasis upon such types of hand weaving as have long since been considered a lost art.

Mr. Worst announces for this year a number of other courses in handcrafts which will be conducted in connection with the weaving course. Among these will be classes in spinning, (of both wool and flax) basketry, folio and simple book-

binding, pottery, leather work, jewelry-making (using native North Carolina stones), block-printing and vegetable dyeing. It is hoped that this variety will make the course of study particularly desirable to teachers of Industrial Arts and to Occupational Therapists.

BALANCE

C. J. Burchard

THE hand weaver who is not fortunate to possess a fixed balanced harness on her loom, will appreciate what I am trying to bring about as a remedy for "UNBALANCE," for most of the four harness four treadle looms in operation today are not in perfect balance when it comes to the operation of the harness; and by harness I mean that portion of the mechanism of the loom hung between the cross head and the treadles by means of which the shed is produced, and most of this off balance is because of misalignment or side pull between treadle and heddle shafts, and because of this misalignment a side or off center pull is exerted upon the lower heddle shaft or frame; mostly caused by the cords which carry the action being made fast at the treadle, so that even if other conditions were equal there would still be no ability to automatically balance the down pull as applied to the treadle, with the result that the harness gets a motion imparted to it which is not harmonious and neither does it move in straight perpendicular lines, one of the reasons for hanging the harness on most of this type loom to the rear and outside the plane of the side pilasters, this swing or side motion had to have space to operate in.

Now with a very simple device recently perfected by the writer, these same heddle shafts or frames can be hung between the pilasters and immediately behind the reed, and be made to operate in this position without interference of the other parts, the result is a more perfect and larger shed opening because of this nearness to the reed.

The four heddle shafts or frames are made to operate in a nearly fixed plane, not fixed in only one direction but, to operate fixedly in three separate planes; vertically, horizontally and laterally, which of necessity removes possibility of unbalanced conditions.

This device can be applied to any four-harness four-treadle loom, with a very little labor and at a nominal cost in comparison with the great advantage gained in the ease and accuracy of operation. It's named the "JIB."