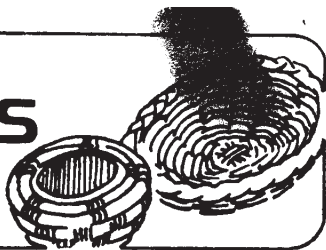


OF BASKETS



A SIMPLE WICKER BASKET

BY SUSAN BROWN

Basket making is an ancient art dating back to biblical times, when sacrifices were made in baskets. There is evidence that basketry was widespread and used in many cultures. However, the American Indian has been unsurpassed in the beauty and design of their baskets, and is due credit for the many useful basket forms and methods now employed in the United States.

Various arts owe their origins to basketry. The art of handweaving and the fabrication of textiles is said to have developed from the technique of plaiting grasses to form a coarse cloth. The art of pottery is also said to have developed from the use of basket forms lined with clay for use in cooking. The grasses and twigs around the clay burned away leaving the fired clay pots.

Wicker is a work of scandinavian origin, meaning small plaint twig, similar to the Swedish word "vikker", which means willow. The early wicker baskets were crude containers made of roots and vines. Today the word wicker applies to any round material used in woven construction. Common modern materials are round reed and willow.

The most suitable material for your first wicker basket is commercially available round reed. This comes from rattan harvesting in

the jungles of the islands of the South Pacific. The rattan is striped leaving an inner core which is the reed we use today. (See Minnesota Weaver from April, Volume 7, no. 7 for more information on cane and reed.)

Other fibers for basket making are available in abundance and variety. You can add color, texture and pattern to the basic form.

They can be incorporated by the traditional basket weavers, or by using other techniques such as crocheting, wrapping, macrame, stichery, knitting and netting. Those used in the traditional method can be natural materials such as vines, grasses, shoots, leaves, runners and bark or processed fibers such as yarns, cords, jute and sisal, or other found materials (such as feathers, shells etc.).

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Number 2 or 3 round reed
Tub or bucket filled with cool water
Glycerin available at drug store
Towel
Plastic garbage bag
String
Screw driver
Utility knife
Scissors or garden shears

PREPARATION OF MATERIALS

- 1- soak coils for 2 to 3 minutes
- 2- unwind and pull out reeds one at a time, separating them into long and short lengths. This is done easier with two people, one at each end of the coil of reed.
- 3- cut 13 one yard lengths of the number 3 reed - the thicker of the two. Tie these together.
- 4- tie a number of long lengths of number 2 reed - these will

OF BASKETS

Catherine Ingebretsen

Whether your interest in baskets is from a collector's or a weaver's point of view, you'll enjoy and learn a great deal from the following books and leaflets:

American Indian Basketry Magazine, P.O. Box 66124, Portland, Oregon 97266, or call (503) 771-8540. \$15/year for four issues.

Arizona Highways, Special Edition: American Indian Basketry, July 1975.

Denver Art Museum, various leaflets, Dept. of Indian Art, 100 W. 14th Ave. Parkway, Denver, Colorado 80204.

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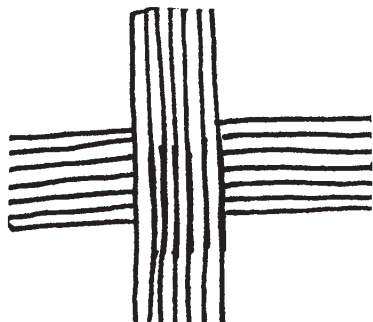
be the weavers - into a circular bunch.

5- soak the bunches of number 2 and 3 reed for 10 minutes and wrap in a slightly damp towel.

CONSTRUCTION

STEP 1:

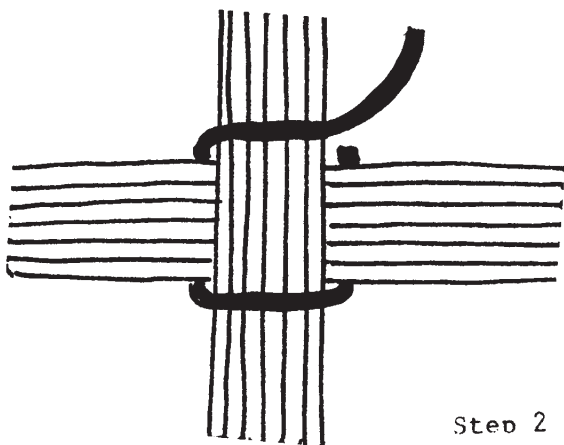
Lay six one yard strand of number 3 reed (called spokes) over six other spokes, at the center, form a cross. Set aside the 13th spoke.



Step 1

STEP 2:

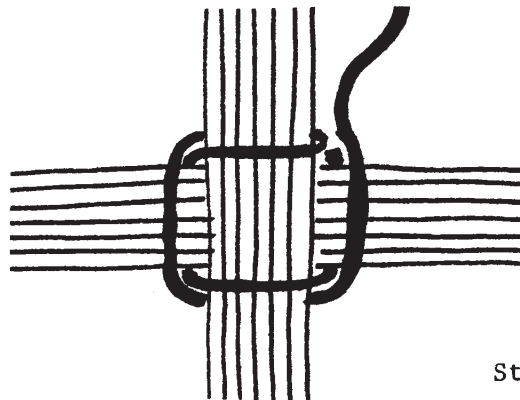
Take the end of a long piece of number 2 reed (the weaver) and place under right side of the cross section. Then move the weaver clockwise over, under and over each group of six spokes.



Step 2

STEP 3:

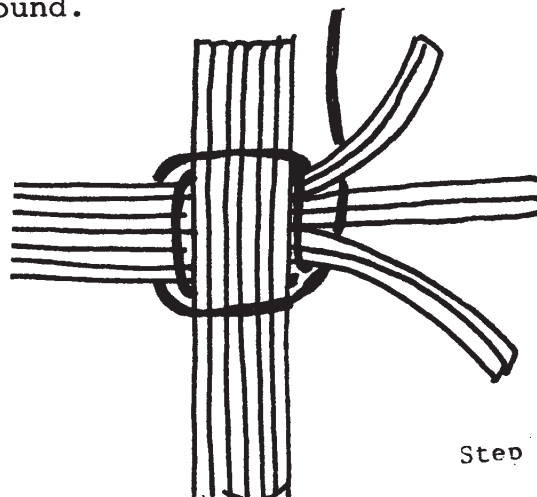
Then reversing direction move the weaver counter-clockwise over each group of six spokes moving under where you went over and over where you went under in the previous round.



Step 3

STEP 4:

Now begin weaving by spreading the spokes apart in groups of two as you move the weaver under, over, under, over . . . moving counter-clockwise for one round.

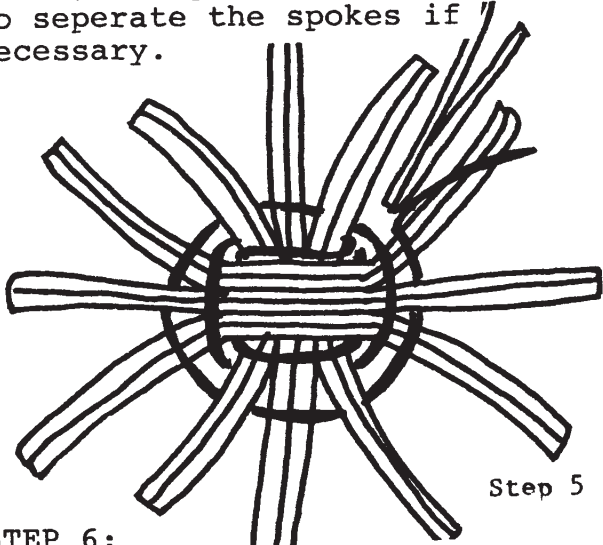


Step 4

Plans are underway for a juried fiber show, Traditions/Transitions II, in October of 1983, at the College of St. Catherine galleries. This will be open to all WGM members and residents of Minnesota. So start planning! And do give us a call if you'd like to help in any way. Kathy McMahon (293-9242) and Ruth Mordy (222-8219) or at the Guild office.

STEP 5:

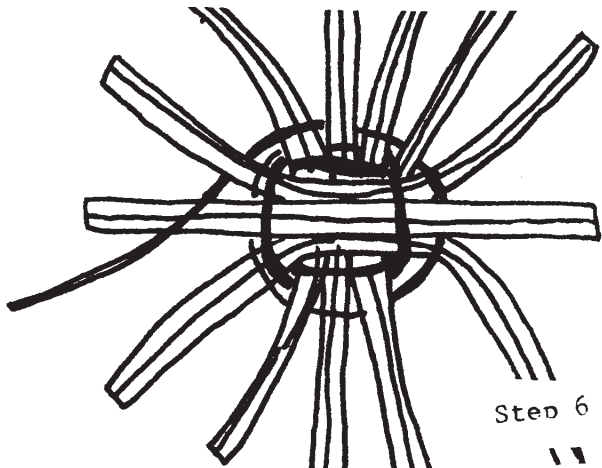
At this point you must add one more spoke pair to make an uneven number of spoke pairs so that you can weave under and over where you wove over and under on the previous round. To add the extra spoke pair take the one yard length of number 3 reed you have set aside and bend it in half and stick the bent end in the corner between the spoke grouping at center cross, using a screw driver to separate the spokes if necessary.



Step 5

STEP 6:

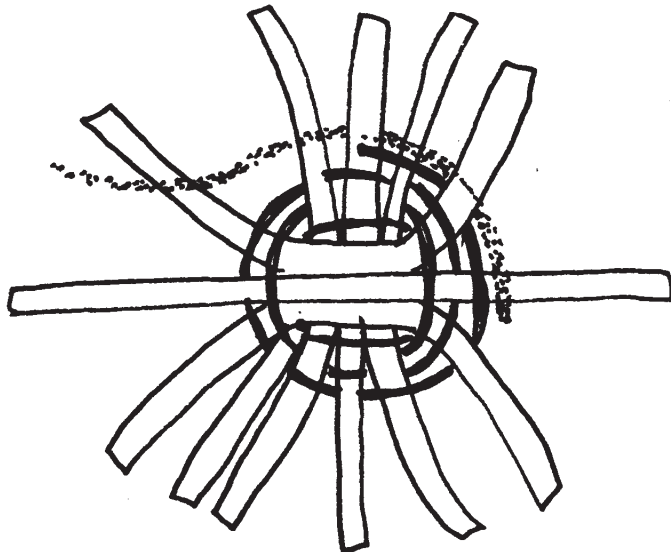
Now continue weaving under, over, under, . . . moving counter-clockwise. Keep spreading the spokes apart until they are evenly spaced around. Use your finger or thumb to bend the weaver around the spokes pushing it close (around the center) against the previous round. The spokes should not be bending.



Step 6

ADDING NEW WEAVERS:

To add new weavers, overlap the end of the new weaver over the end of the old weaver by 2 or 3 spoke pairs. Leave ends to inside, they can be clipped later.



SHAPING:

Base: Keep base flat by weaving firmly yet loose enough so as not to pull the spokes upward with the weaver. The base should be a flat plate shape for two or three inches.

Bowl Shape:

After forming the base, gradually pull the spokes upwards by pulling tighter on the weaver as you weave. Turn the basket on its side with the spokes away from you. As the basket takes shape this will prevent the spokes from poking you in the face.

Dish Shape:

To keep a flat dish shape, weave over and under the spoke pairs until the spokes are one to two inches apart. Then separate the spokes into

singles and weave over and under each and every spoke for one round. Again you will need to add an odd spoke by sticking a single spoke into the already woven part of the basket. This method also works to increase the size of the basket. (Make sure the spokes are long enough for a larger basket-see spoke length information.) Concentrate on keeping base flat by weaving loose enough so as not to pull the spokes upward, as is the natural tendency.

OTHER WEAVES:

To add another dimension, try some of these techniques:

Double weavers: weave with two weavers at the same time, as if they were one.

Flat reed or cane: Use a piece of one-half round cane or flat reed by additional designs.

Twine: Bend the weaver in half and twine around the spokes.

Twill: Weave in a twill pattern over two, under one. For this pattern you may need to add a spoke pair, delete a spoke pair or weave in singles because you need an even number of warp strands to create the twill.

OTHER FIBERS:

Use other soft fibers with the weaver as a double weaver for design. Such fibers as soft yarns, lightweight jute and sisal, light natural grasses and vines may be used. Other heavier fibers can be used in place of the reed as a weaver such as seagrass (a rope-like twisted grass), fiber rush (a twisted paper cord), heavy cord, rope, or jute. These materials should not be soaked.

Natural materials such as roots, barks, vines, grasses

and leaves, can be used as weavers, if they are quite flexible and can be wrapped without bending, it may be used in the base of the basket. If the green material can be bent around the wrist it can be used in the sides of the basket. If it is a very soft material, such as feathers or grasses, it can be used with a reed weaver for support. Natural materials can give a nice texture, color, and scent. See Carol and Dan Hart's book for more ideas on natural materials.

BORDERS:

There are many different borders that can be used. I will show you two simple borders here. see my reference books for more ideas on borders. The amount of the spoke that should be left unwoven depends on the border being used and how far apart the spokes are spaced. Allow four to eight inches for your basket.

Soak the spoke ends so they are pliable enough to bend easily.

BORDER ONE:

The simplest method is to cut the ends of the spokes at an angle with a one edged razor blade or a utility knife and stick the ends down into the woven part of the basket one spoke pair to the right. This is a good finish to use when your spokes are seperated by quite a bit as in a large basket, or very, very close together as in a basket with a small opening. Pull ends to inside and clip off with shears.



Border I

BORDER TWO:

Leave six to eight inches of unworked spokes.

First Round: Carry each spoke pair behind the spoke pair to its right. Continue around carrying the last spoke pair behind the loop of the first spoke pair already turned down.

ROUND I



ROUND II



Second Round: Carry each spoke pair around the spoke pair on its right and to the inside. Leave enough tail so that it won't pop out and clip with shears.

FINISHING:

With shears clip the ends of the weavers that are sticking to the inside of the basket. The entire basket may be dyed with natural dyes at this point. Or you may use a spray varnish or wood stain for a polished finish. Store extra reed in a plastic bag after it has dried or it will mildew. One coil of reed should make three smaller baskets approximately six - eight inches in diameter. Share your reed with a couple of friends. Basketry is fun to do together.

FIGURING THE LENGTH OF SPOKES:

To decide how long to cut your spokes before weaving your basket, determine roughly how high you want the sides, how large you want the base and what kind of border you want. Add up the total number of

inches for sides, base, and border and then add an inch or three for good measure. For the border figure at least six inches for very simple borders, and smaller baskets. Add another four inches for more complex borders. Also add another four inches if you are making a large basket and the spokes are farther apart. These are general estimates so always allow yourself extra. A one yard spoke length allows for a basket with approximately these figures: four inch base, six to eight inch sides, 16 inches for border. But you will find that every person's baskets will vary quite a bit in shape even though the beginnings were the same.

SUSAN BROWN

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Weaving with Reeds and Fibers, Osma Galliger Tod and Oscar H. Benson, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1975.
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