



BASKETRY

I. GOAL:

Students will learn how to make baskets.

II. OBJECTIVES:

- A. Students will learn the usefulness of basketry; its history and techniques.
- B. Each student will complete his/her own basket to take home.

III. HISTORY:

No matter who your ancestors were, they made baskets. In every part of the world, people wove the natural materials available to them. Today, the baskets you see are still manmade. Man has yet to invent a machine to make a basket.

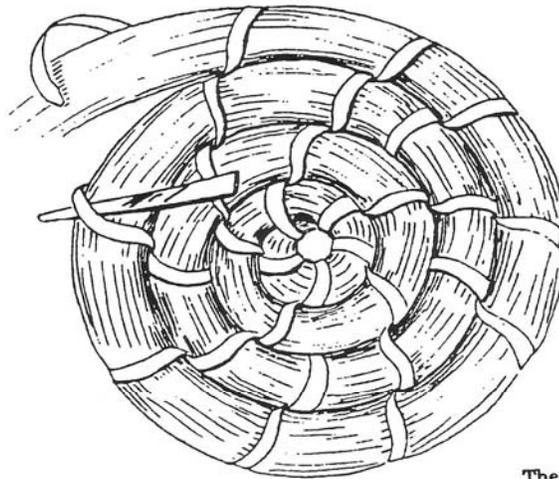
Basketry was a major implement in the everyday lives of yesterday's people. Together with cloth sacks, boxes, and wooden barrels, baskets made up the total sum of a settler's devices for storage and for transporting what could not be carried in his hands. There are many different types of baskets for as many different uses. These are woven with three basic techniques - coiling, plaiting, and wicker basketry. (See illustration on page 2.)

Traditionally, basket makers have collected materials from plants and trees native to the areas in which they live. Natural materials were dried to give them their final shrinkage, then soaked until pliable before using.

California Indians made containers, storage baskets and fish baskets from the materials gathered around them. Baskets were woven from grasses, leaves, stalks and other plant materials. Tightly woven baskets were used for small seeds, cooking, and for holding water. Baskets that were loosely made had various shapes according to the proposed use. Storage baskets, fish traps, and burden baskets were large - many had various weaves and intricate design.

California Indians used both coil and wicker basketry methods. Often times, baskets were handsomely decorated according to the creativity and skill of the weaver and the materials available. These might have included feathers, shells, quills, and seeds or stones formed into beads.

Native people gathered roots and shoots from willow, pine and cedar trees, from bushes, grasses and ferns. Materials were gathered in the valleys, hills and in the mountain regions. Often natural materials from one region were traded for those of another to allow even more diversity in the final product.



COILING:

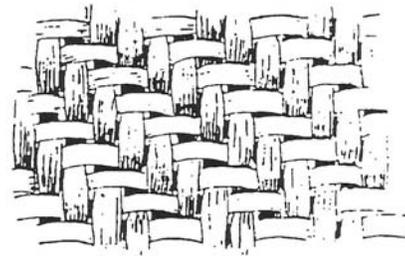
(left)

A method of basketry which involves the wrapping and sewing together of loose, bundled materials arranged in spiral coils.

PLAITING:

(below)

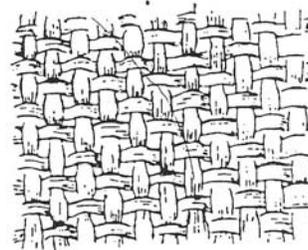
The interweaving of flat basketry materials.



WICKER BASKETRY:

(above)

Includes a broad series of techniques for making baskets primarily from round materials.
Basketry Page 2



It took many hours to prepare the materials before a basket could be started. Depending on the size of the basket and the materials being used, a basket could take days - sometimes even months - to complete.

If this is the first basket you will make, California Indian tradition dictates that you give it away. Give it to someone who is special to you, because you are special to that individual. If you experience any frustration while making this basket, it will lesson as you think about how much pleasure your gift will bring.



IV. BASIC TOOLS AND SUPPLIES:

- **Reed** - Commercial round reed is sold in coils by weight and diameter. Attached is a list of suppliers in this area where reed can be obtained.
- **Awl** - For opening spaces in the weaving (to tuck ends of materials into the weave as needed in repair.)
- **Pencil** - To mark centers of each spoke (optional.)
- **Cutters** - Scissors, or any cutting device.
- **Tape Measure** - Yardstick, to measure spokes - the spokes are cut at approximately 30 inches. Or the child could measure from the tip of their nose to their finger tips.
- **Needle-nosed pliers** - To bruise materials for up-setting.
- **Bucket** - To soak the reed, to make pliable for weaving. Cold water for hot weather, warm water for those chilly winter ELP's.
- **Creativity** - Each basket should be a creative expression of self. No two baskets will be (nor should be) alike.
- **Patience** - Slow down, enjoy the moment and let a little of yourself enter your basket.
- **Colored Yarn or cloth strips** - Used for identification on each basket. See tips for identification below.

V. TERMS:

- **Base** - The bottom of the basket.
- **Bruise** - Crushing the fibers in only a very narrow area.
- **Breaking down** - (Don't cry) dividing or separating a group of spokes into smaller groups or single spokes.
- **Border** - The finished edge at the top of a basket formed by the interweaving of the spokes.
- **Flow or spring** - The angle the sides of the basket take.
- **Mordant** - A substance, such as tannic acid, that combines with a dyestuff to produce a fixed color in a fiber.
- **Reed** - The flexible strands cut from the core of the long, slender stems of the rattan palm. Types of reed include flat, flat oval, half round and spline.
- **Rim** - The top or opening edge of the basket.
- **Spokes** - The strong, upright sections of the basket that form the "frame." The frame is held together and filled with weavers (wrap.)
- **Twining** - A weave in which two weavers are used alternately in a twisting pattern, in front of one spoke and behind one spoke. Also called pairing.
- **Weavers** - The long, flexible pieces used to weave or fill in between the spokes. (Weft.)



VI. BASIC PREPARATION:

DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE NIGHT BEFORE TO PREPARE MATERIALS. IF POSSIBLE, GET OTHER PARENTS OR FRIENDS TO HELP.

THE FOLLOWING FOUR STEPS SHOULD BE DONE AT LEAST A WEEK AHEAD OF TIME. BUT THEY CAN BE DONE MONTHS AHEAD OF TIME, AND WILL MAKE YOUR JOB AS BASKET TEACHER MUCH EASIER.

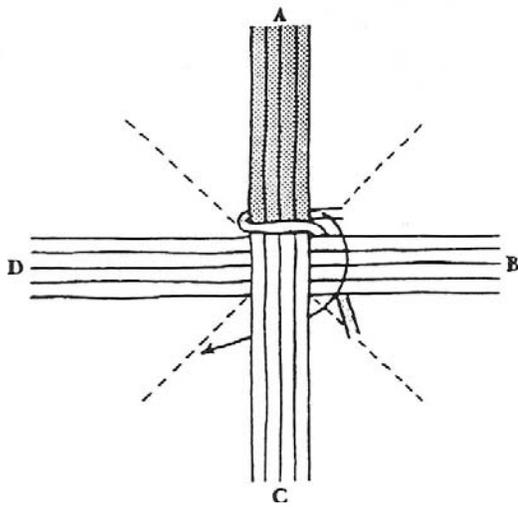
1. **Purchase Commercial Round Reed.** Reed is sold in a coil weighing approximately one pound. It is sold in many different sizes. The best size suited for this basket is #3 or #4. You will need to purchase one coil for every five students, plus one.
2. **Dye the coils.** If you intend to dye any of your materials, now is the time. Refer to the section on stains and dyes.
3. **Separate the bundles.** Each coiled bundle must be soaked, untied and separated. Soak the bound reed for about 5 minutes before starting. Remove ties. With one person holding one end of the untied coil, a second person starts pulling out strands (the shortest first), one at a time. The shorter reed will be the spoke materials and the longer reeds will become weavers. Continue until all strands are separated. Coil up each of the longer reeds individually. These coils take up less room, fit into a bucket easier, will not become tangled and can be soaked individually as needed. They are coiled while the reed is wet.
4. **Cut spokes and knot in groups of eight.** Each basket is constructed by twining weavers around a set of spokes. Cut 8 spokes about 30 inches long and as a group - tie them into knots. You will need one knot consisting of eight 30 inch spokes for each child participating.

VII. GETTING STARTED:

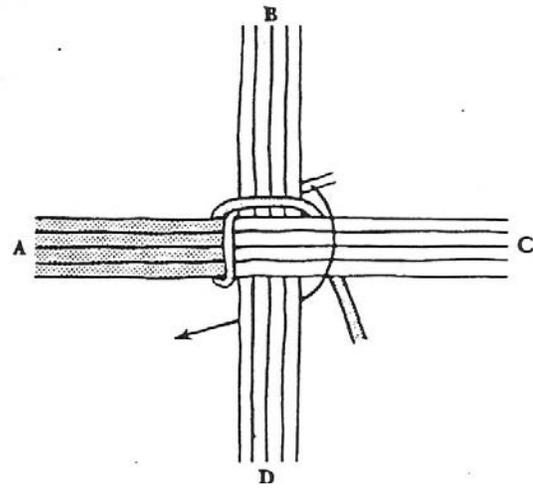
Have a bucket of water ready to soak the reed. Dyed reeds need to be soaked in different buckets from the natural reed. This will prevent the colors from bleeding. Throw in the spoke bundles and at least 2 long coils of weaver material per child. These can soak while you are giving the history of basket making and a short explanation to the children

With the children gathered around, (small groups are best) pass out a group of knotted spokes to each basket maker. (This basket frame is made of 8 spokes, each cut approximately 30 inches long.)

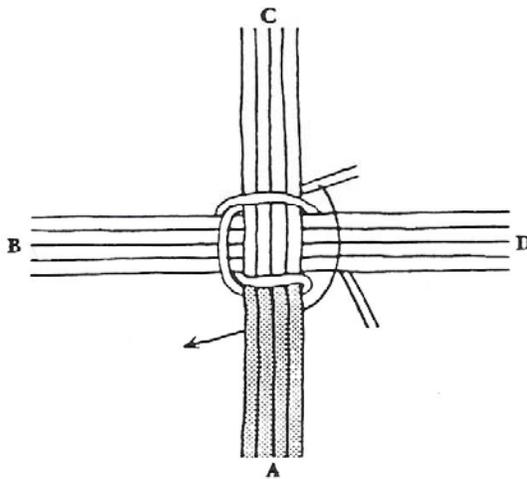
1. Tie the base together. Split the group of 8 spokes into two groups of 4 spokes each. Place these spokes in a cross position. Take a long weaver and fold the weaver, (about 1/3 and 2/3.) Do not fold the weaver in half because the weavers will run out at the same time. Place the fold around the set of spokes. Three rows of twining weave are used to tie the base. The front and back weavers will cross between the group of spokes. (See diagram.) You will be weaving in clockwise direction while turning the base counter clockwise. The opposite direction is for left handed people.



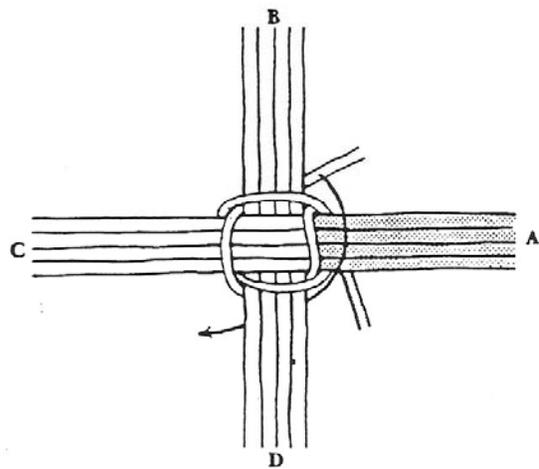
(1) Begin with arm upward (A). Hold the back weaver out of the way and bring the long top weaver down behind (B). Then bring the short-back weaver up on top of (B).



(2) Next, turn the cross counterclockwise so (B) is upward, hold the back weaver out of the way and bring the top weaver down behind (C).



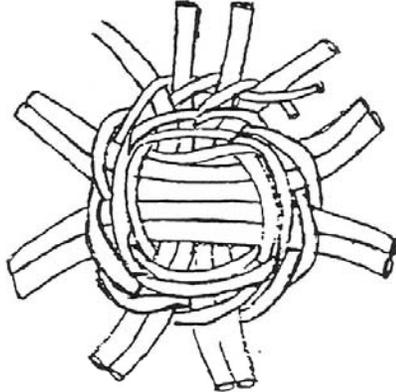
(3) Bring the back weaver up on top of (C).



(4) Continue this sequence of bringing the top weaver down and the back weaver up at each corner, turning the cross counterclockwise so that the corner being worked is always at the right. Complete 3 rows of twining.



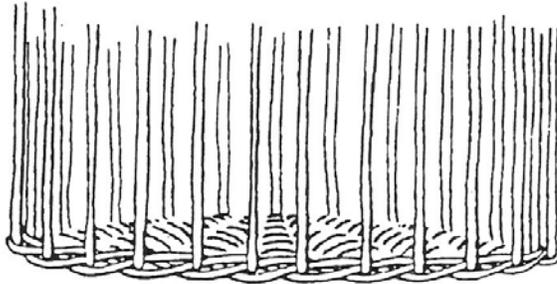
2. **Breaking-down - separating the spokes.** Continue weaving and separate the groups of 4 spokes into groups of 2 spokes. Twine as above, complete 3 rows. Break-down again into individual spokes, (like the wheel of a bicycle) and continue weaving the base to about the size of the palm of your hand.



BREAKDOWN:

Dividing or separating a group of spokes into smaller groups or single spokes.

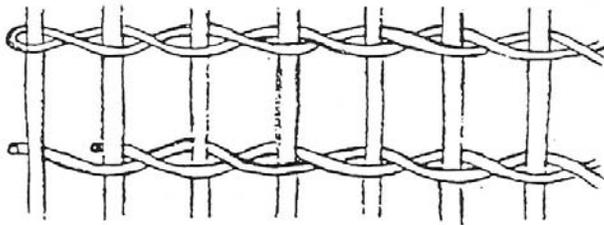
3. **Up-set - forming the side of your basket.** Up-set your basket by applying gentle, yet firm pressure to the spokes as you weave around them. If much pressure is applied, the sides of the basket will be more straight, less pressure creates a gentle flow.



UP-SET:

Bending and weaving of several rows which set the shape of the basket.

4. **The sides** - Continue weaving around, adding weaver as needed until the sides of your basket is done. The height will depend on the diameter on your base and the slow of the up-set. You need to have enough spoke length left over to create a border (the rim of your basket.) Leave enough spoke to wrap around the top of your basket - covering 6 standing spokes.



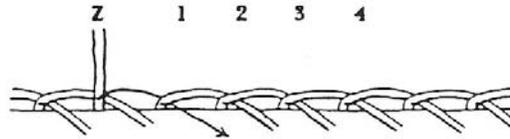
TWINING:

A weave in which two weavers are used alternately in a twisting pattern.



5. **The border** - The border is made with the leftover length of spoke. There are 3 steps in making a simple rolled border.

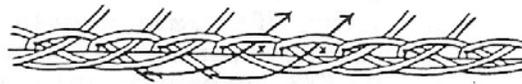
A. Reach behind 1 spoke and grab the spoke before it. Bring it behind one and out. Continue all the way around the basket.



B. Now, pick any spoke and have it go over two spokes and in the hole of the second spoke. Continue all the way around the basket.



C. Trim the spoke at an angle, leaning against a spoke. Do not cut them too short.



REMEMBER - It is very important to send the child home with a complete project. Better a small finished basket than a larger uncompleted "dust collector." This may necessitate starting the baskets before the Fort date. In fact, I recommend this. It takes a little more energy on your part, but you and the children will enjoy your special day at the Fort better if the baskets can be finished with fewer time pressures.

If the baskets are started and the up-set completed beforehand, the basket can easily be completed at the Fort during your Basketry station (in approximately 30 - 45 minutes.)

Label each unfinished basket with either identification method explained below then gather them into groups, according to the groups they will be in during their re-enactment. Group information can be obtained from the teachers.

At the ELP have a bucket of water ready. Before each group is scheduled to gather at your station, put in the appropriate group of half-made baskets. When the children arrive, their baskets can be pulled out of the water and they can continue weaving.



VIII. STORAGE:

If you have wet reed left over when it is time to quit, allow it to dry thoroughly, then keep it in a cool, dry, well ventilated area. Since reed is a natural fiber, it will easily support the growth of mold if it is put away damp. Excessive humidity also can cause reed to mold, so **DO NOT STORE YOUR SUPPLIES IN SEALED PLASTIC BAGS OR IN A BASEMENT**. Since sunlight and heat can damage the flexibility and usefulness of your materials, **NEVER STORE MATERIALS OUTSIDE**.

Paper grocery bags are the recommended storage containers. Cardboard boxes with lids work well, placed in a cool dry place. Paper will absorb any excess moisture and protect the materials from sunlight.

IX. STAINS AND DYES:

When dyed materials are woven into a basket, they add a touch of color and enhance designs. You may also dye an entire basket after finishing it. Reed and . natural materials can be dyed with a variety of dyes.

Natural dyes include: walnut hulls, onion skins, strong coffee and tea, and a multitude of barks, roots, and berries. Most natural dyes (one exception is walnut hulls) need a mordant to fix the dye with the fiber. Salt, alum, ammonia, iron, and cream of tartar are just a few. If you are interested in natural dyes there are many books available that include recipes for successful dye pots. Rit Dye works great and there is a wide range of colors and shades available. Follow the package directions.

Loosen the coil of reed, wash with soapy water and dye to the color desired. Untie all but one tie on the coil and hang it in a cool dry place. **DO NOT HANG IN THE SUNSHINE**. Like all dyed fibers, colors will fade faster if exposed to direct sunlight.

X. IDENTIFICATION:

Baskets will need to be labeled with each student's name. The following are two tried and true methods.

1. Write the child's FORT name on strips of sheets with a laundry marker. The strips are then tied to the basket.
2. Color coding with either yarn or embroidery floss. Each child picks a different color, or combination of colors, of yarn or embroidery floss and ties the selection to their basket. A master list of names and corresponding color combinations will need to be made to help the children remember their color choice.



XI. SUPPLIERS:

Check the resource list.

Bibliography:

Hoppe, Flo. Wicker Basketry. Loveland, Colorado: Interweave Press 1989.

Potts, Marie. The Northern Maidu. Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph Publishers, Inc. 1977.