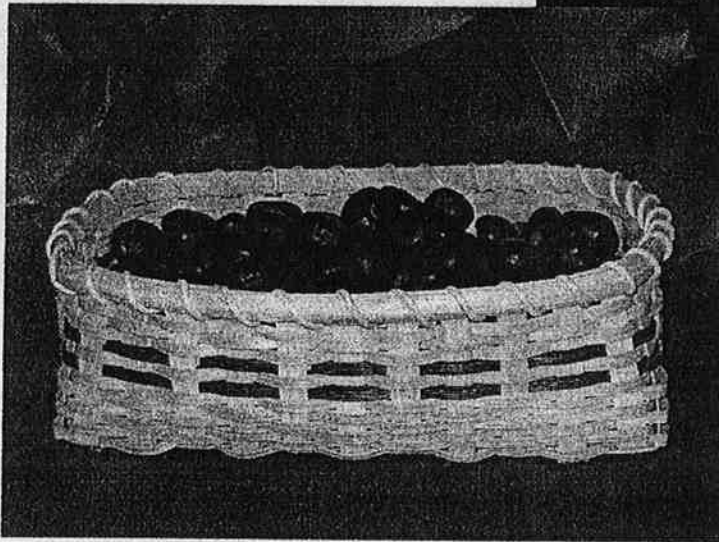
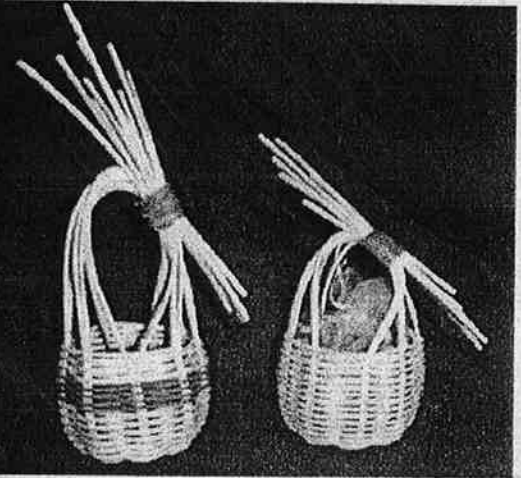
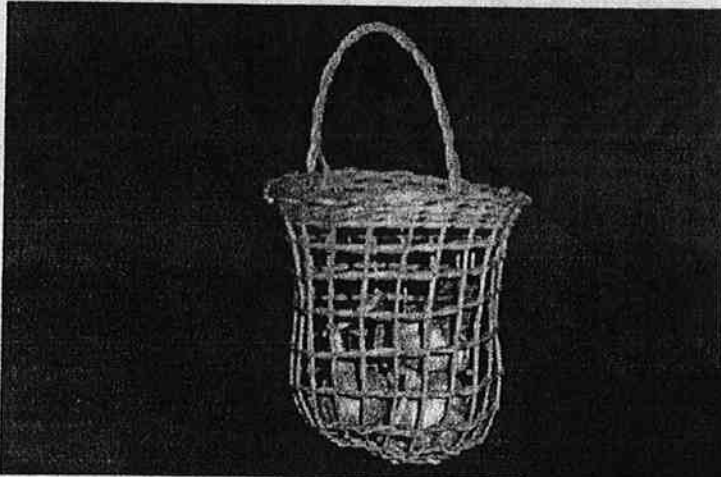


# Introduction To Basketry



**Buckeye Leadership Workshop**  
**March 19 – 24, 2004**

Facilitators:

**David Kalkbrenner**  
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# Introduction to Basketweaving

Basketry is one of the oldest of crafts. It even preceded and influenced the development of cloth weaving and pot shaping. The first baskets were probably temporary, created on the spot to transport food. The next obvious step was to use materials that resisted decomposition to weave containers of some permanence.

Traditional American Splint basketry has evolved from a melting pot of settlers. The first settlers probably brought with them knowledge of basketry techniques. As settlers moved about to different regions and climates, their basketry evolved to adapt to the materials available. Most basket makers in the New World were also farmers (most people were at one point), using their spare time to produce baskets for their own use and possibly earn some extra income. During the winter months, farm families gathered around the fire to make and mend implements and baskets. Sailors on Nantucket gathered around the stove in the general store to weave baskets.

From this great mix of cultures and materials, and the demand for new, attractive designs, a variety of basketry styles and construction materials have evolved and continue to develop.

Baskets are among the few items that man has had little success in producing mechanically. There are some exceptions, such as factory-produced, stapled bushel baskets and some assembly line weaving in Asian and Pacific nation basket factories. However, they are far removed from the individual craftsmanship found in handmade baskets. Basketry is one of the few crafts that span the spectrum from holding trash to being exhibited as fine art.

## Purpose of the Class

Class participants will have the opportunity to learn various methods of basketweaving using flat and round reeds. They will also learn techniques and ideas that they will be able to use to teach this art to others. Class members will learn basic basketweaving terms and will gain an understanding of the tools, materials and techniques used in basket making. Time permitted, participants will have the opportunity to experiment with different designs and materials.

## **Basketry Tools**

Tape measure / ruler  
Awl  
Clothespins

Reed Cutters  
Utility Knife/Paring Tool  
Bread Ties

Large Pail / Container  
Pencil  
Reed

## **Types of Reed**

### **Flat Reed, Flat-Oval Reed, Oval-Oval, Round Reed**

Reeds are sold in hanks, coils or rolls in most craft or hobby stores as well as mail order suppliers. A hank is one pound of that specific size of reed. Wider reed has less footage per hank. Thinner reed has more feet in the same 1 pound roll. Generally speaking, far better quality reed is found from basketry supply houses and not at the local arts/crafts store. It is worth your time to find quality reed!

<b><u>Flat Reed Size</u></b>	<b><u>Approximate Length/Hank</u></b>
1"	70'
7/8"	80'
3/4"	90'
5/8"	120'
1/2"	185'
1/4"	370'
3/16"	400'

Flat reed has a "right" (good) side and a "wrong" (bad) side. **It will be important to determine the different sides of each piece of reed BEFORE starting to weave or construct your basket!** The method to determine the sides of the reed is by simply bending the reed over one finger. The **wrong** side will "splinter" or show fine hairs. The **right** side will remain smooth. **Always weave or construct your basket with the wrong side facing toward the inside of the basket!**

## **Basket Terms**

- Stakes/Spokes:** The upright elements of a basket that the weaver(s) wind through.
- Upsett or Upstake:** Bending the stakes of the basket base up to form the sidewalls of the basket.
- Weaver:** That which is moved over and under the stakes, spokes or ribs of the basket. Sometimes called the weft.
- Packing:** Pushing weavers together so that there is little or no gap between the new weaver and the one previously placed.

Basketry materials require soaking in warm water so that they are pliable enough to weave, except for seagrass which needs no soaking. It will be necessary to re-soak during weaving when materials begin to dry out. Soft, wet, pliable reed is much easier to work with than reed that is too stiff and/or dry. There may be times when a wet sponge or spray bottle is appropriate to dampen weavers, handle wrapping and lashing pieces. Soaking time varies depending on the thickness of the material and from 1 minute to 15 minutes is usually sufficient. After a bit of experience, you will be able to determine the

appropriate soaking time. Over-soaking should not harm the materials. However, overnight soaking is not recommended as the reed may expand due to the absorption of water and could cause unsightly gaps in the weaving when the materials shrink back to their normal size when thoroughly dry.

Basketry projects can be re-shaped to some extent while still wet. For instance, place a heavy object in or on top of a piece that does not set level and allow it to dry.

Top separate strands of a wrapped bundle of round reed, soak the bundle for a few minutes in warm water. Remove from the water and cut all ties except the one securing the ends. Carefully remove desired strands or form smaller bundles or coils for future use or dyeing.

Never store damp materials in plastic bags or airtight containers. This will contribute to molding and mildew problems (Yuck! Icky!).

Reed pieces may be dyed using fabric dye before weaving them into the basket. When interwoven in a natural basket, the dyed pieces add a nice touch of color. You can also dye the entire basket upon completion. Over-the-counter fabric dyes (Rit) work fine and are typically brighter/more vibrant, depending on what color you are using. Specific basket/reed dyes are available through basket supply stores and are generally have a more subdued color. HINT: you can always make things darker. You can't "remove" the dye if it's darker than the desired color.

## **TECHNIQUES**

### **Shaping**

The shape of the basket will be determined by the position in which the spokes are held. For example: If spokes are held at a right angle to the base while weaving, the side will be straight. If held inward or outward while weaving, the side will curve.

To adjust sides: If sides begin to curve inward when they shouldn't, hold each spoke outward into proper position as you weave around it. If sides begin to curve outward when they shouldn't, hold each spoke inward into proper position as you weave around it.

In general, when using flat or flat-oval spokes and weavers, spokes must be thicker than weavers must.

### **Over and Under Weave**

A separate piece is used for weaving each row around an even number of spokes. Place one end of the weaver **over** a spoke then pass it **under** one, **over** one, **under** one, etc. around to the start. Pass the starting point by 3 spokes and make a mark on the weaver where it will pass under the center of the next spoke. Cut the weaver at the mark and tuck the end of the weaver under that spoke. Now both ends of the weaver are hidden and secure. Ideally, the ends of the weavers will always be hidden behind a spoke and will not be visible.

### **To start each new row:**

Place the end of the weaver **over** a spoke that is part way around the basket and repeat the over under weave. **NOTE:** When a weaver passes **over** a spoke in the preceding row, the weaver on this row must be **under** that spoke. Complete the row, ending the weaver in the same manner as the first row.

### **Splicing**

When a weaver is too short to complete a row, cut it off where it passes **over** a spoke. Place the end of a new weaver **under** the third spoke to the left (right for LH). Following the path continue the over and under weave. This can be used with lashing too when a piece ends up being too short.

# BASKET MAKING TIPS

Rub the pencil marks off your reed with your fingertip while the reed is wet.

Vinegar in the soaking pan with colored reed will help keep it from bleeding.

Glycerin or fabric softener in the soaking pan will help soak the reed as well as being friendly to your hands.

If you are having trouble inserting spokes while folding and tucking at the top of the basket, cut the points off the corners of the spokes to form a pointed end.

When you cut spokes from flat reed, cut the horizontal spokes straight across and the vertical spokes at a diagonal. This will make it easier to know which are which after soaking.

To fold round reed without breaking it, twist it between your fingers or pinch it with needle nose pliers.

A way to estimate how long a piece of reed you will need to lash a rim, is to wrap it around the basket 2 ½ to 3 times.

Wipe soaked, dyed reed with a paper towel or old towel before weaving with it to help prevent bleeding. If you do get bleeding - touch up the natural reed by carefully using a Q-tip soaked in bleach.

Don't put reed in your mouth or let pets drink from your soaking water. Reed is treated with insecticides so that it can be imported.

# GARLIC BASKET



Materials needed:

# 4 round reed

# 3 round reed - (choose the two longest weavers you can find in the bundle)

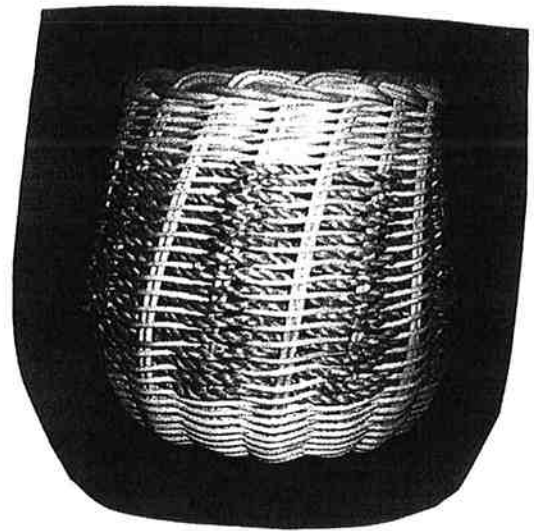
Cut 10 pieces of # 4 reed for spokes and mark the centers. Hold 5 spokes in one hand horizontally (see # 1) and the other 5 on the other hand vertically and place one group over the other. Hold all in one hand and place a length of # 3 reed behind the left hand group of spokes (the group that is to the back) and rand (see # 2) for 3 rows. Separate the spokes into groups of 2 and rand for another 2 rows. Add the 2<sup>nd</sup> weaver and start to twine (see # 3) around every spoke. You will begin to work in a spiral as you continue to weave. Begin to upsett the basket (gradually - you want a rounded bottom) as soon as you have completed 1 row of twining. After the 1<sup>st</sup> row, your rows of twining should be about  $\frac{3}{4}$  " apart. Continue twining until you have about 5" sides. The last 3 rows of twining should be right next to each other and slightly flared outward. Cut off your weavers. Soak the ends of the spokes and crimp each where they come out of the top of the basket. Working in a clockwise fashion, lay one spoke behind the other and bring it to the outside of the basket (see # 4). Continue until all spokes are to the outside. You will have to tuck the last spoke through the hole made by the first spoke. Then take each spoke and bring it behind the next to the inside of the basket and through the hole to the right of the spoke you just went under. Continue around the basket until you get to the last spoke. You will have to loosen the first spoke so you can insert the last one through the opening. Tighten all spokes and trim the ends on the inside of the rim.

**HANDLE:** Soak a long length of # 3 reed and determine which is the back of the basket and insert one end down into the top rows of twining next to a spoke. Make the handle as long as you want - in an upside down "U" shape and insert the weaver halfway through the top rows of twining in the 6<sup>th</sup> hole from where you started. Bring the weaver back up and wrap it around the handle back to where you started. Put the weaver through the twining, and back out and wrap again to the other side. Repeat over and back one more time and end by inserting the end of the weaver into the rim of the basket.

# FLOWER POT BASKET

## Materials needed:

- # 3 round reed
- # 5 round reed
- 1/8" sea grass - 10 yards



Cut 8 pieces of # 5 reed - 30" long and 16 pieces of # 5 reed - 14" long

Mark centers of 30" pieces and sharpen one end of each 14" piece.  
Soak all the # 5 pieces and several lengths of # 3 reed.

**BASE:** Begin with two groups of four spokes and lay one group on top of the other at the marked centers. (see # 1) Lay the end of a "3 weaver behind the center and work the weaving in a clockwise direction randing (see # 2) over the first set of four spokes, under the next and so on until you have completed four rows. Add another weaver and then twine (see # 3) for 2 rows. Add a 14" spoke on each side of the existing sets of two using an awl to make a space. Divide the spokes into 8 sets of two and twine for 5 rows. Divide the spokes into 16 sets of two and twine for 1 row. Continue twining as you upset the sides. It is important to keep the base flat while you begin the upset. (Once you have established the sides, you can go back and soak the base to flatten it back out.) Continue to twine for 9 rows with # 3 reed, shaping the basket as you work. Cut off one of the # 3 weavers and add the end of the sea grass. Continue twining for about 4" or until you run out of sea grass. Add another # 3 weaver and twine for 6 more rows. Cut both weavers. Soak the spokes well. **ROW 1** - (see # 4) start the rim by taking one set of spokes and bringing them behind the next set of spokes (counterclockwise) and back to the outside. Continue around the basket. Tuck the last set through the hole made by the first set. **ROW 2** - Take one set of spokes under the next set (counterclockwise) and through the hole to the right of the second set and into the inside of the basket. Continue until all spokes are tucked in. When you do the last set, you will have to loosen the first set to make space for the last spokes. It is important to keep each set of spokes parallel to each other while you are making the rim. Trim the ends of each spoke so it lies flat inside the basket.

