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Hedgerow basket

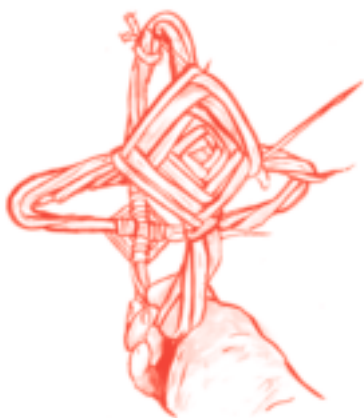
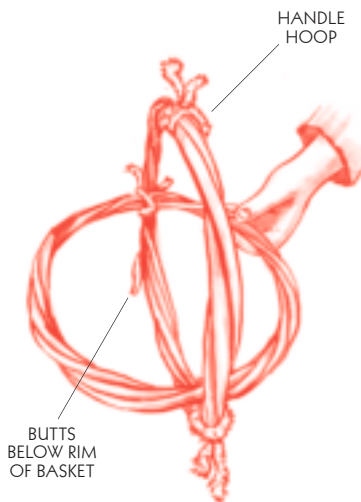
Weaving is a craft that puts us in touch with something very ancient within ourselves, although it was not that long ago that there was a weaver in every village who would have made all manner of household items in this enchanting way.

This 'hoop frame' basket design can be made using a number of species commonly found in hedgerows, such as willow, clematis, honeysuckle and bramble (see pages 20–21 for more information on collection and preparation). I learnt a lot of the weaving skills and techniques you'll find in this book from the amazing Mollie and Nick McMillen, who work in the south-west of England.

1. Take four rods of willow, each around 2m long and approximately 1cm wide at the butt (thicker end), and make two hoops. For more guidance, see steps 1–3 of the wreath project (page 78).

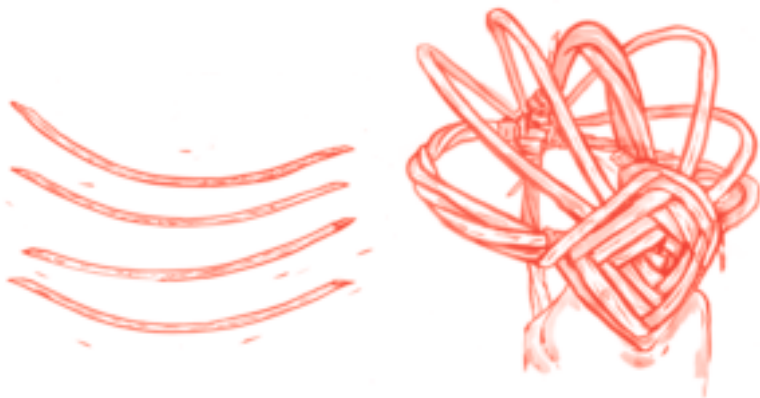
Fit the hoops inside each other to set the depth of your basket – the lower the position of the horizontal hoop, the shallower the basket (and vice versa). Make sure the rod butts on the handle hoop are lower than the basket rim.

Tie the hoops in place with pipe cleaners or string. You can remove these during step 2. It's also a good idea to tie a piece of string to your handle to remind yourself which way up the structure goes! This can be taken off after step 3.



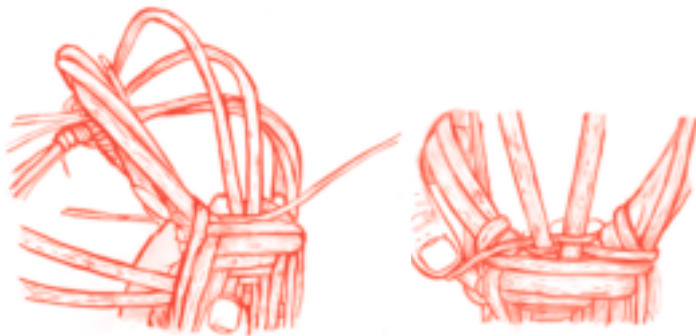
2. It's time to fasten the hoops together permanently. You will need two more willow rods, each at least 1.2m long. Splice the rods (page 21) to leave you with four half-rods.

At this point, use the 'god's eye' weave, featured on pages 65–67, to fasten the hoops together using two spliced half-rods on each side. Trim the loose ends.



3. Now we will make the 'ribs' that create the framework for the basket. Cut four lengths of hazel or older, drier willow. 'Slupe' (cleanly cut at an angle) the ends so that they bend and sit snugly into the back of the 'god's eye' fastening on each side.

Play with the lengths of the ribs, cutting a bit more off each time until you have the profile you desire.



4. Let's get weaving! Gather a bundle of willow or other hedgerow rods – each rod should be at least 1.2m long. Begin with the tip (thinner end) of a long, thin rod and weave in and out of the ribs, over and under, starting out at the side of the basket and working towards the centre.

Note: If your rod finishes on a butt, begin the next weave with a butt (and vice versa with the tips). Make sure the protruding ends stay on the inside of the structure and sit next to the ribs rather than the basket rim.

You may also choose to add more ribs as you go to ensure a smoother curve at the base of your basket.



FIG. 1

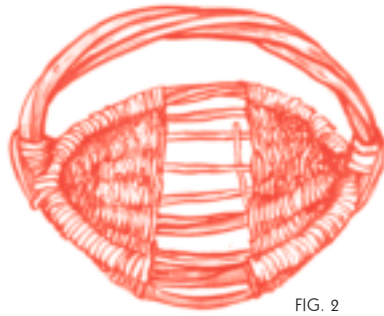


FIG. 2

5. Continue your weaving, adding more rods and alternating the weave over and under the ribs with each adjacent rod. Swap ends from time to time as your weave moves towards the centre.

It is good to 'double wrap' your rods at the rim (go twice around) on either side at the start of your weaves (figure 1) until they are in two straight parallel lines heading towards the centre, as shown in figure 2.

Simply carry on working until the weave meets in the centre and your hedgerow basket is ready!