

Baskets By Tex

HAND WOVEN ~ HAND CRAFTED Est. 1965 Texas USA



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INTRODUCTION

Tex Willis of northeast Texas shows off his award-winning hand-crafted cultural baskets as a winning entry in the 2024 State Fair of Texas Art Show.



Tex Willis is a prominent figure in Winnsboro, Dallas, and East Texas, celebrated for his multifaceted roles as a devoted father, retired career military soldier, former auctioneer, and dedicated community leader. Passionate about vintage automobiles and working with his hands, lifetime member of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), he actively participates in the Autumn Trails Model A Ford Club, as well as clubs in Dallas and Tyler, while also contributing to his church and serving others. On rainy or chilly days, when chain-sawing, carpentry, or farm work isn't an option, Tex channels his energy into the intricate art of basket-making, crafting beautiful pieces from natural materials found in the earth.

Tex's Baskets: Hand Woven Hand Crafted

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Basket #1



Basket #1

Small bowl basket, brown jute split-stitch spiral.
[Item #1 ~ 20230203]



Basket #2

Basket, spiral

[Item #2 ~ 20230223]



Basket #3

Long leaf pine needle basket with 3 stitch styles;
Candy Langhoff (church Christmas Party)
[Item #3 ~ 20231218]



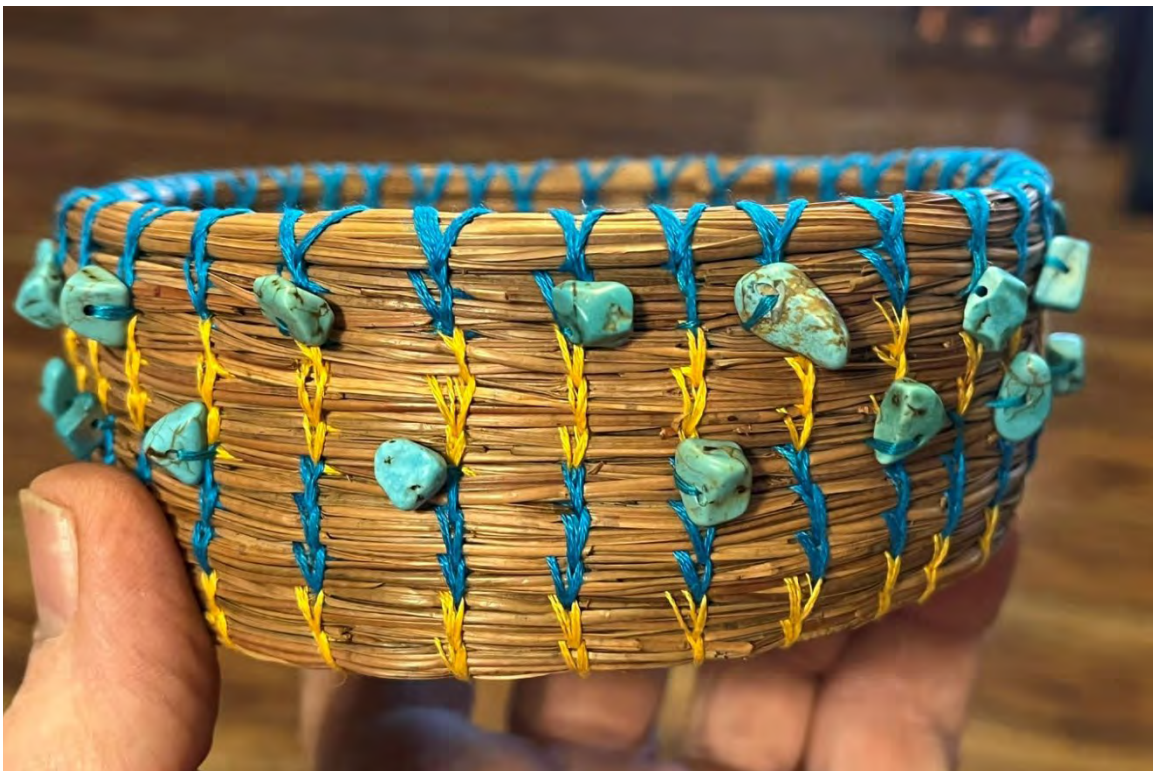
Basket #4

Long leaf pine needle with straight stitch
Patricia Childers [Item #4 ~ 20240103]



Basket #5

20 hours ~ Pine needle with gold/turquoise thread and turquoise gems.
Amy Lucky [Item #5 ~ 20240117]



Basket #6

16 hours ~ Gourd/ pine needle hybrid, white jute thread, pine cone handle on lid.
Chana Gail. [Item #6 ~ 10240119]



BASKET MAKING

MATERIALS

Pine Needles – Long Leaf 15”-20”

Pine Needles – Loblolly Leaf 9”-16”

Pine Needles – Slash Needle Leaf 5”-9”

Vines – Honeysuckle

Vines – Wisteria

Vines – Grapevine

Grasses

Bamboo

Gourds

Leather

Beads from the earth

STITCHES

Ti, Wheat, Straight, Circular, Cross, V, popcorn

STONES, GEMS, ROCKS, SHELLS, WOOD, GLASS

- Hemp cord, Sinew (artificial or real), twine, thread
- Dyes, stains, alcohol ink, natural paints, wood burning tool
- Big Eye Needles, Needle Threader

ACCENT MATERIALS

Bone, Antlers

Pine Cones

Earth Nuts

Feathers, natural, wild

Sea shells, stone beads, wood beads, sharks teeth, arrow heads, wood chips, pine cone seeds, items from nature, glass (sea glass, cut/polished glass, art glass, glass beads)

CENTERS: Centers: wood, covered wood (skins, cattle, deer, rabbit linen or cotton cloth, natural items), agates, sliced stones, sea shells, glass, anything from nature that lays flat, custom imprinted (lamine, resin, logos, etc.)

Basket #7

20 hours ~ Gourd/pine needle, red with pine cone lid. 2nd place at the
2024 Texas State Fair! Amy Lucky [Item #7 ~ 20240123]



Basket #7



Basket #8

17 HOURS – 8mm picture jasper center and 6-4-2mm tiger eye beads.
Luanne Norris (\$35) [Item #8 ~ 20240128]





Long Leaf Pine Needle



Long Leaf Pine Needles - Prepared

Loblolly Pine Needle



Slash Pine Needle

Basket #9

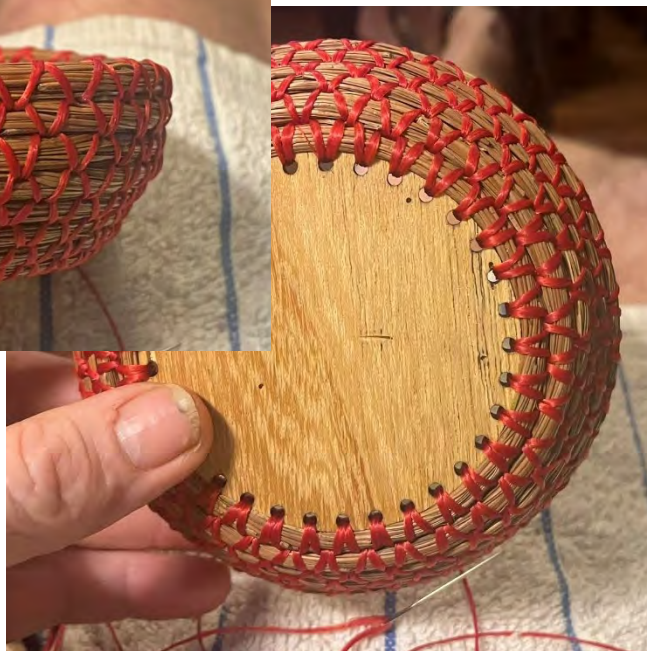
10 hours ~ Texas-grown Gourd / pine needle basket with cedar base,
African porcupine quills, boar hair and guinea feathers. Gina Howton.
[Item #9 ~ 20240203]





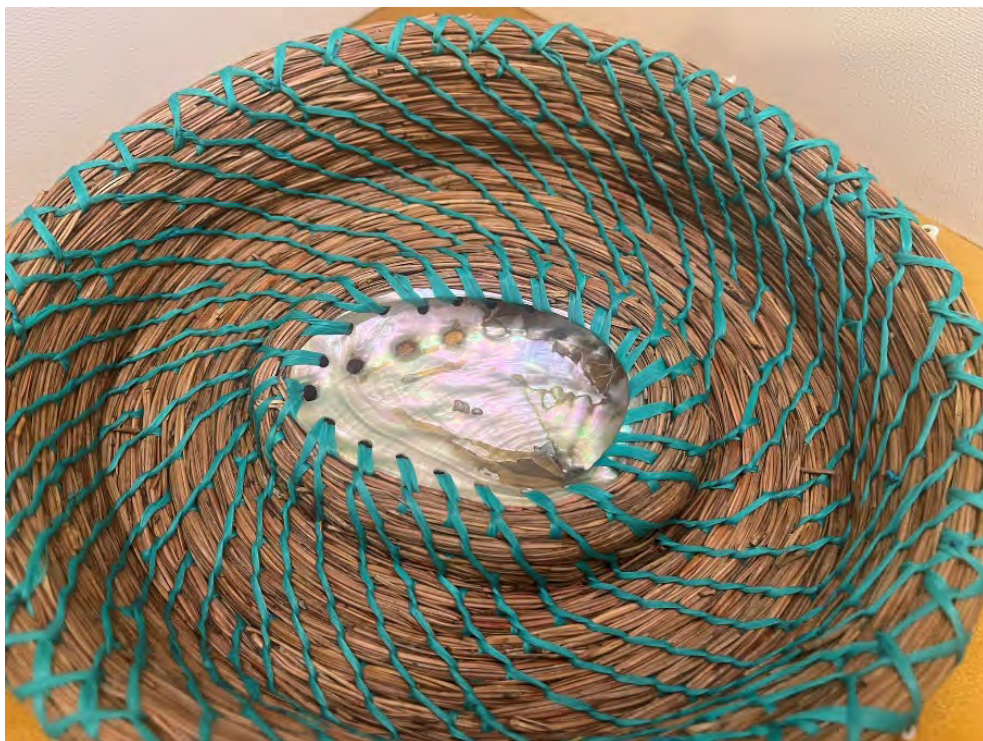
Basket #10

8 hours pine needle basket with Camp Bandina wood base, red sinew, diamond stitch. Lowe Ann Elliott. [Item #10 - 20240210]



Basket #11

20 hours ~ Pine needle with turquoise thread and abalone base center with Shiva and conical shells adorned on the outside. Anna Spainhouer [Item #11 ~ 20240213]



Basket #12

13 hours ~ Gourd/longleaf pine needle with pine needle base, 5 row top, green embroidery thread. Dolphin, blue crab and sea turtle wood burned and colored.

Doug Austin. (\$80) [Item #12 ~ 20240217]





Basket #13

6 hours ~ Red and White Camp Bandina base, red embroidery thread.
Lowe Ann Elliott. [Item #13 ~ 20240218]



Basket #14

13hours ~ Gourd/Longleaf pine needle with pine needle base, green sinew. Sea horse, alligator and palm trees wood burned and colored on gourd. Diamond stitch pattern. Doug Austin (for his sister). [Item #14 ~ 20240225]



Basket #15

9 hours ~ Longleaf pine needle with 2014 Texas Tour badge base, Ti stitch on bottom and diamond stitch on sides. DMAFC Texas Tour raffle donation.

[Item #15 ~ 20240228]



Basket #16

25hours ~ Longleaf pine needle with turquoise and red double-coil in a Ti stitch. Leather wrapped coil then dark brown sinew in a Wheat stitch up the sides. To finish the base, another leather wrapped coil, then up with a Popcorn stitch. Deer antler integrated in and rabbit fur rim. Finished with a Guinea feather. - Alan Elmore. [Item #16 ~ 20240315]



Basket #17

20hours ~ Double coil pine needle, black and white sinew with a Ti stitch, starting out with a Chinese Ying and Yang symbol using a pearl and black onyx.

Jessica Solonka [Item #17 ~ 20240318]



Basket #18

46hours ~ Hunting Lodge pine needle basket. Longleaf pine needles starting with white sinew Spirograph pattern on a leather covered plywood base then a leather wrapped coil highlighted with turquoise sinew. From the leather, a Ti stitch extends in tan, sun-dried needles out to another turquoise sinew highlight before another leather wrapped coil.

From that, there is a transition to brown sinew with a Wheat Stitch using oven dried, sage green needles. After that is another turquoise highlighted, leather wrapped coil back to a white sinew Popcorn Stitch ending in one more turquoise highlighted, leather wrapped coil at 13.5 inches across. Coming up the sides is white sinew in a Ti stitch ending wrapping around a deer antler shed and topped off with a leather wrapped coil. Black sinew was used to wrap sections of pine needles in-between the Ti stitches for a pattern and finished off with a turkey feather. 1st place at the 2024 Texas Stare Fair! WCA [Item #18 ~ 20240323]



Basket #18



Basket #18



Basket #19

14 hours ~ Longleaf pine needle basket. 1/4" plywood base covered in leather, black artificial sinew on the base using a wheat stitch, and red sinew on the sides also utilizing a wheat stitch. Spirograph pattern on plywood/leather base with white sinew, topped off with white sinew under the red sinew.

Pam Gambrel. (\$100) [Item #19 ~ 20240929]



Basket #20

32 hours ~ Longleaf pine needle basket. 9" base, 4" gradual taper sides using straight stitch and Jute twine. 4 braided honeysuckle braid rings in center. Solid wrapped white coil around side. Delayna Pruitt [Item #20 ~ 20241116]



Basket #21

13hours ~ Longleaf pine needle with yellow embroidery thread in a wheat stitch and hinged lid. Church Christmas party. Patricia Childers. [Item #21 ~ 20241201]



Basket #22

18hours ~ Longleaf pine needle with yellow artificial sinew in a wheat stitch pattern and hinged lid and locking clasp.

Chana Gail. [Item #22 ~ 20241208]



Basket #23

12hours ~ Longleaf pine needle with green artificial sinew. This is a Ti stitch base, with white chamois wrap with four rows of wheat stitch on the sides, accented with wood bead row, finishing off with two rows of wheat stitch. Nancy Cheshire.
[Item #23 ~ 20241221]



Basket #24

12hours ~ Longleaf pine needle with a red Winnsboro Church of Christ logo base and red sinew with a Ti-stitch on the base and a wheat stitch on the sides. Raised white sinew under the final stitching on the top rim. LJ Skillman. [Item #24 ~ 20241226]



Basket #25

15 hours ~ Longleaf pine needles with leather covered base. White artificial sinew with a Ti stitch base with turquoise highlight stitching. Black wheat stitch sides with turquoise highlight and turquoise sinew inlay on rim. Michael Monk.

[Item #25 ~ 20241231]



Basket #26

12 hours ~ Longleaf pine needle with hair-on cowhide covered wooden center. Black sinew in a wheat stitch pattern for the base and sides. Side has row of wood beads. Base and rim highlighted with turquoise sinew. Gary Gray. [Item #26 ~ 20250102]



Basket #27

17hours ~ Longleaf pine needle with a Leather covered wooden center. Turquoise sinew in a Ti stitch pattern on the base. Leather coil to transition from the base to the sides. Wheat stitch coming up the sides with a row of rough turquoise beads in the middle of the side. Charity Auction, Chaney Wallis. [Item #27 ~ 20250106]



Basket #28

12hours ~ Longleaf pine needle with hair-on cowhide covered wooden center. Black sinew in a wheat stitch pattern for the base and sides. Side has row of wood beads. Base and rim highlighted with turquoise sinew. Belinda Phillips.

[Item #28 ~ 20250110]



Basket #29

13hours ~ Longleaf pine needle basket. Leather wrapped wooden center with straight stitched natural sinew. A deer antler and rawhide knife sheath was woven into the sides with alternating coils around the sheath. Inside the sheath is an obsidian dagger made by Chris Wood. Basket is going to Chris Wood, But Cris Wood donated it to an auction to benefit Chaney Wallis' Leukemia treatments. Tex Willis bought it back from the Auction. WCA [Item #29 ~ 20250111]



Basket Knife Scabbard #30

12hours ~ Longleaf pine needle knife scabbard rawhide sheath for the blade, covered in continuous coil spiral-wrapped with natural sinew. Custom made for an obsidian knife knapped by Chris Wood [Item #30 ~ 20250113]



Basket #31

18hours ~ Longleaf pine needle basket knife holder with deer antler. Black and white hair-on cowhide leather covered wooden center. Brown sinew in a wheat stitch pattern with rawhide sheath and deer antler woven in opposite side of sheath for counter-weight. Bone handle obsidian blade knife made by Christopher Wood in sheath. Christopher Wood [Item #31 ~ 20250121]



Basket #32

5 hours ~ Longleaf pine needle basket with red sinew utilizing a straight stitch pattern. WCA SOLD! [Item #32 ~ 20250128]



Basket #33

14hours ~ Longleaf pine needle basket with brown hair on cowhide over a wood base. To stitch on base transitioning to a wheat stitch up the sides with a row of wooden beads. Winnsboro Center for the Arts, Texas. [Item #33 ~ 20250130]



Basket #34

5 hours ~ Longleaf pine needle basket with green sinew utilizing a straight stitch pattern. WCA SOLD! [Item #34 ~ 20250203]



Basket #35

13hours ~ Black and white hair on cowhide hide over wood base. Ti stitch on center, to a leather coil, transitioning up the sides in a Wheat stitch. Side has a row of alternating stained and unstained wooden beads and topped off with a leather coil. Victoria Dickerson. [Item #35 ~ 20250201]



Basket #36

12hours Longleaf pine needle basket. Wooden center covered with brown hair-on cowhide. Turquoise sinew in a wheat stitch pattern. Matching cowhide rim. Chris and Denise Perry [Item #36 ~ 2025022]



Basket #37

9 hours ~ Longleaf pine needle basket. Turquoise sinew with a straight stitch pattern. Row of turquoise beads on the side. 4" across, 2" high. Replacement for WCA
[Item #37 ~ 20250405]



Hand-woven Basket Making Materials

Hand-woven baskets are crafted from a diverse array of natural materials, primarily flexible vines, grasses, and other pliable plant fibers, each chosen for its unique properties and regional availability.

Vines like wisteria, with its strong, durable runners, and kudzu, an invasive vine with pliable stems, are harvested in late fall or spring and soaked to enhance flexibility, making them ideal for rustic or sturdy baskets. Honeysuckle, with its thin, flexible vines, is perfect for delicate designs, while grape vine and bittersweet offer woody strength for basket frames or decorative elements, often requiring soaking to weave effectively.

Grasses and reeds are equally vital in basketry: sweetgrass, prized for its fragrance and soft texture, is used in Native American coiled baskets, while sedge and cattail, harvested from wetlands in late summer, provide tough, fibrous material for twined or plaited designs. Reed, with its tall, hollow stems, and corn husks, an abundant byproduct, are versatile for both coiled and woven baskets, often split or soaked for ease of use.

Other plant materials, such as willow, a basketry staple with long, flexible branches, and pine needles, bundled for coiling, add regional flair, particularly in European or southeastern U.S. traditions. Bamboo and rattan, often processed into uniform strips, are favored in Asian-style baskets for their smooth, lightweight strength, while thin strips of birch, cedar, or elm bark contribute decorative or sturdy elements.

Preparation varies—vines and reeds are typically soaked, grasses and bark dried or moistened—ensuring pliability or stability. Sustainable harvesting is crucial to preserve ecosystems, with materials like kudzu offering abundant, eco-friendly options in some areas. The choice of material often reflects local traditions and availability, requiring minimal tools like scissors or awls, making basketry a timeless, accessible craft.

Basket #38 – 1st Vine Basket

Honeysuckle ~ 20211014



Basket #39 –2nd Vine Basket

Honeysuckle, two sections dyed with natural beet juice ~ 2021014



Basket #40 – 3rd Vine Basket

Honeysuckle ~ 202111014



Basket #41 -4th Vine Basket

Greenbriar ~ 20211014



Basket #42 – 5th Vine Basket

Honeysuckle, bark removed. Cathy Broun ~ 202110209



Basket #43 – 6th Vine Basket

Wisteria, bark removed, with bark covered handle. Jeff & Cindy Hightower ~
20240105



Basket #44 – 7th Vine Basket

Wisteria, bark removed. Cecilia Uber. ~ 20240106



Basket #45 – 8th Vine Basket

Honeysuckle, bark removed, some on base dyed with beet juice, with pine needle ring on side. Patricia Childers for auction. ~ 20240123



Basket #46

51hours ~ 8.10z. Pine needle. Wooden base covered with brindle cowhide. The bottom is white sinew Ti stitch, and a red sinew wheat stitch separated by a leather coil. A leather coil transitions the base to the sides. The sides are a modified Ti-Stitch (no diagonal line on the back side) with white sinew. Two rows of wooden beads and the rim is finished off with leather securing the deer antler handle and a turquoise highlight. Embellished with turkey and mallard feathers and deer hide on the antler. [Item #47 ~ 202504]



Basket #46



Basket #47

12 hours ~ 1.8 oz. Longleaf pine needle. Model A Ford Texas Tour radiator badge center with golden yellow sinew in a Mariposa stitch pattern on the base transitioning to a wheat stitch in the sides. Donation to the 62nd Annual Texas Tour. [Item #46 ~ 202504]



Basket #47



Basket #47





Basket #48

5 hours ~ Pine needle with black sinew in a straight stitch pattern, with a 4" diameter, 1.5" high. (Designed and made to replace another basket sold at the WCA.) [Item #48 - 20250424]



Basket #49

5 hours ~ Pine needle with natural sinew in a straight stitch pattern. Wooden bead in the center. White sinew highlights edge the rim, with a 4" diameter, 1.5" high. To replace basket sold at WCA [Item #49 - 20250424]



Basket #50

8 hours. ~ 8.5" diameter, 2" high. 4.3 ounces of needles. Oregon Loblolly pine needle basket. 1930-31 Model A Ford hubcap center. Black sinew in a wheat stitch pattern. Greg Weast (Oregon) provided the pine needles. Going to Greg Weast. [Item #50 – 20250426]



Basket #50



Basket #51

8 hours ~Pine needle with leather covered wood center. Black sinew with a Ti-stitch pattern on the base, transitioning to a wheat stitch up the sides. Red sinew border around center and on rim. Donated to VFW post 512, Dayton, TX for a fundraiser. [Item #51 - 20250526]



Basket #51

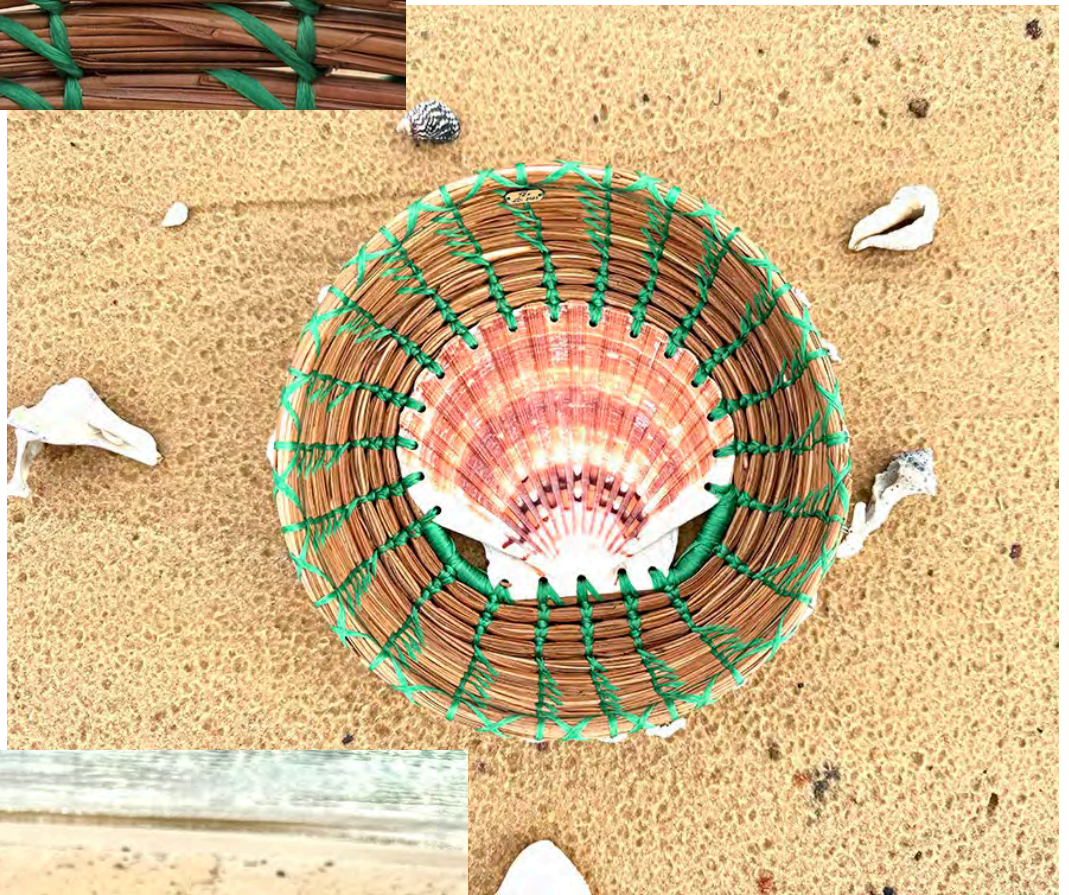


Basket #52

10 hours ~ Pine needle basket with scallop center. Green sinew in a Ti-stitch pattern on the base and wheat stitch up the sides. Shark tooth decorations stitched in-between the top and second row. [Item #52 - 20250529]



Basket #52



Basket #53

9 hours ~ Pine needle basket. Timber rattlesnake covered wooden center and rim.
Natural colored sinew in a diamond stitch pattern. [Item #53 – 20250609]



Basket #53



Basket #54

25 hours ~ Pine needle basket with blue and white ribbon agate inserted into a wood base. The design uses alternating coils with white and blue sinew utilizing a Ti Stitch on the base, transitioning to a wheat stitch up the sides. The sides are decorated with items that have been picked up off of a beach.

[Item #54 – 20250617].







Basket #55

16 hours ~ Pine needle basket. Wood center covered in leather, black sinew Ti-stitch on the base, transitioning to a yellow sinew wheat stitch knotted between coils up the sides. Black sinew trim on the rim and yellow sinew trim on leather covered wood base. Six coil-base and sides. [Item #55 - 20250704]



Basket #56

3 hours ~ Pine needle basket with cotton twine using a straight stitch in a spiral pattern. [Item #56 – 20250718]



Basket #57

14 hours ~ 14hrs. Pine needle basket with cowhide covered wood base. Green artificial sinew in a Tistitch pattern. The rim is lined with dead and naturally dried rabbit brush. Clay and Mary Mason. [Item #57 – 20250902]

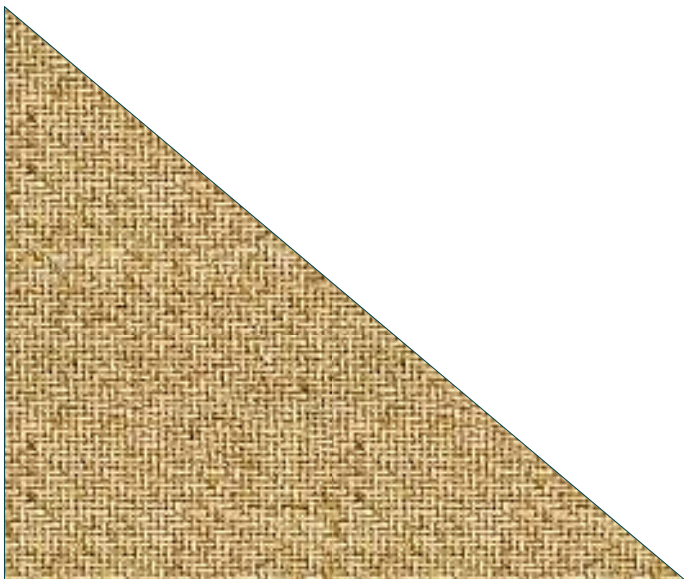
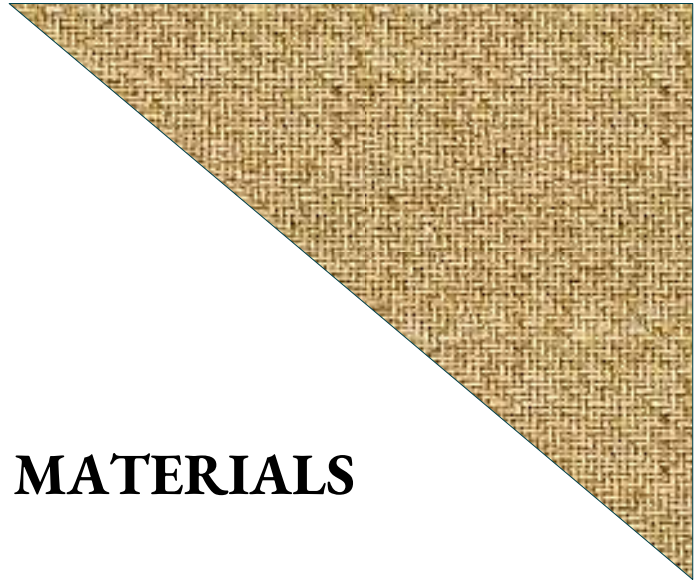




BASKETS

FROM NATURAL MATERIALS

HAND WEAVING & CRAFTING



Harvesting Natural Materials - Best Seasonal Time, Methods, Preparations

The best time to harvest materials for hand-woven baskets varies by plant type, as each has a specific season when its fibers are most pliable, durable, or abundant.

This section discusses the various materials for making hand-woven baskets.

- ✓ Harvest Responsibly, Sustainability, Regional Notes
- ✓ Pine Needles
- ✓ Wisteria & Grape Vines
- ✓ Honey Suckle
- ✓ Kudzu
- ✓ Bittersweet
- ✓ Bamboo, Rivercane, Reeds
- ✓ Grasses
- ✓ Maize, Corn Husks
- ✓ Tree Bark & Stems

TOOSL & HARVEST RESPONSIBLY

Harvesting natural materials for hand-woven baskets is a joyful, sustainable craft that connects you with nature's bounty! In late summer to fall, gather fragrant sweetgrass and cattail leaves from wetlands, or collect fallen pine needles for cozy coiled baskets. Spring brings flexible willow branches and peelable birch bark, while late fall and winter offer sturdy wisteria, grape vines, and river cane, perfect for rustic weaves. Kudzu and honeysuckle vines, plucked in spring or fall, add a wild touch, and bamboo or reeds, harvested in cooler months, promise smooth, lightweight strips. With a snip, a soak, and a little love—drying grasses in the shade or softening vines in warm water—these gifts from the earth transform into beautiful, handcrafted baskets. It's a delightful way to weave nature's rhythms into your creations, all while treading lightly on the land!

Harvesting should be done responsibly to avoid damaging plants or ecosystems. Follow local guidelines and obtain permission if harvesting on public or private land.

Harvest responsibly helps avoid depleting natural stands, especially for river cane, which is less abundant than bamboo or reeds. As another example, kudzu is abundant and invasive, making it a sustainable choice in some areas. Regional

material choice often depends on local availability. For instance, sweetgrass is prominent in North American basketry, while rattan is more common in Southeast Asia.

Weaving typically requires clean pliable materials and minimal tools—scissors, awls, or knives for cutting and shaping materials.

Tool selection and maintenance is important for harvesting responsibility. Maintaining clean sanitized tools helps reduce spreading diseases from plant to plant or tree to tree, minimizing transmission, even airborne, from region to region. Make sure tools are thoroughly cleaned after each harvest, and stored in a clean dry environment. Basic tools include pruning shears, a sharp knife, a splitting tool, and a soaking container (e.g., a bucket or tub). A scraper or sandpaper can smooth rough edges.

Drying materials thoroughly is crucial to the storage process, to avoid mold, contamination and plant borne diseases. Methods include air drying on wire screens indoors, or outdoors especially on warm sunny days, thinking carefully to bring indoors on high humidity days, during rain, and at night before the dew falls.

Some other methods include extremely slow air drying spread out on a parchment paper covered cookie sheet with noting on top to allow the humidity and moisture to rise and dissipate. Set the oven on bake at the lowest temperature, no more than 170-degree Fahrenheit, and checking and turning materials frequently, approximately every 15 minutes, up to desired level of drying. Do not leave unattended.

Store dried materials in a cool, dry place to prevent mold or insect damage. Bundle strips loosely to maintain shape, and check storage containers and facilities often, rotating stock.

PINE NEEDLES

Collecting and preparing pine needles for basket making is a straightforward but meticulous process, as the needles must be gathered at the right time and treated properly to ensure they are suitable for weaving, particularly in coiled baskets. Pine needles, often from longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) or other species like ponderosa (*Pinus ponderosa*), are valued for their length, flexibility, and rustic aesthetic. Below is a detailed guide on collection and preparation.

Pine needles (*Pinus* spp.), often from longleaf pine, can be harvested year-round but are typically collected when dry and abundant, often in fall. However, the ideal time is late summer to fall (August–October) when needles naturally fall or are mature on the tree.

LOCATION.

Look for healthy pine trees in public forests or parks that permit collections, or yards (with permission). Ideally, select longleaf pines, as their needles average 8–18 inches long, making working with them easier. Avoid areas treated with pesticides or near roads, commercial animal or poultry farms, as needles may be contaminated. Check local regulations or obtain permission if collecting on public or private land.

METHODS for COLLECTING PINE NEEDLES

Minimal tools are needed—gloves for collecting, scissors or a knife for trimming sheaths, and a container for soaking, a place for drying, and screens for air circulation is beneficial.

Gather fallen needles fallen needles are often preferred because they are already dry and require less processing, and collecting them avoids harming the tree. If harvesting from a tree, select brown, mature needles from the ground beneath the tree, and not green ones, which are too sappy and prone to mold. Avoid needles that are moldy, discolored, or brittle, as they may break during weaving. Use a rake or gloved hands to gather large quantities efficiently. Aim for clean, intact needles without excessive debris.

Harvesting from Trees (if needed): Gently pull mature, brown needles from lower branches, taking care not to damage the tree. Collect only what you need to ensure sustainability.

Gather enough for your project; a small basket may require several handfuls, while larger projects need bags full. Needles are typically bundled into small groups for coiling, so collect with bundling in mind.

Preparation of Pine Needles

Once collected, pine needles must be cleaned, sorted, and conditioned to make them pliable and durable for basketry. The process involves several steps:

1. **Cleaning:**
 - a. Remove debris by shaking off or sift needles to remove dirt, twigs, or other debris. Spread them on a clean surface (e.g., a tarp or table) to sort through.
 - b. Remove Sheaths: Pine needles grow in bundles (fascicles) held together by a papery sheath at the base. Gently pull or snip off the sheath to separate individual needles. For some basketry styles, sheaths are left on for added texture, but removing them creates a smoother look
 - c. Rinse (Optional): If needles are dirty or dusty, rinse them in lukewarm water with a mild dish soap. Avoid hot water, which can damage the needles. Rinse thoroughly and pat dry with a towel to prevent mold.

2. **Sorting:**
Sort needles by length and thickness to ensure uniformity in your basket. Longleaf pine needles vary significantly, so group similar sizes together. Discard broken, moldy, discolored, or overly brittle needles, as they can weaken the basket.
3. **Drying:**
If needles were rinsed or freshly collected, airdry them in a shaded, well-ventilated area for 1–3 days. Spread them loosely on a screen or cloth to prevent mold. Avoid direct sunlight, which can fade or embrittle the needles. Fallen needles are often already dry and may skip this step unless they feel damp.
4. **Soaking:**
Good needles are flexible when soaked, uniformly colored (tan to brown), and free of cracks. Test a small batch by bending to ensure they don't snap. This process ensures pine needles are clean, flexible, and ready for creating durable, beautiful coiled baskets.

Before weaving, soak the needles in warm water for 10–30 minutes to make them pliable. Use a shallow container, as prolonged soaking can cause discoloration or mold. Some weavers wrap soaked needles in a damp towel for a few hours to maintain flexibility without oversetting. For extra pliability, some basket makers briefly boil the needles (5–10 minutes) in water with a splash of vinegar or glycerin to preserve color and softness, then rinse and cool them.
5. **Bundling (Optional):**
For coiled basketry, group needles into small, uniform bundles (about 1/8–1/4 inch thick) and secure with a temporary tie (e.g., string or a twist-tie). This makes it easier to stitch the needles into coils using a wrapping material like raffia or sinew.
Trim the ends of bundles to create neat, even tips if desired.
6. **Storage:** Store cleaned, dry needles in a cool, dry place in breathable containers (e.g., paper bags or baskets) to prevent mold. Avoid plastic bags, which trap moisture. Properly stored needles can last for months or years.

WISTERIA & GRAPE VINES

Wisteria (*Wisteria* spp.) and grape (*Vitis* spp.) vines, valued for their strong, woody runners, are ideally harvested in late fall or winter after their growing season, when the sap is low, reducing brittleness and easing flexibility during weaving. It is often soaked to increase pliability. These materials are popular for rustic baskets for their woody textures and vine thickness.

HONEY SUCKLE

Honeysuckle vines, used for delicate basketry, should be gathered in late summer or fall while still green to maximize their flexibility.

KUDZU

Kudzu, (*Pueraria montana*) is known as an invasive vine, mostly in the southern U.S. regions. It is best collected in spring or fall when its stems are pliable and easier to work with. It is best soaked to soften the material.

BITTERSWEET

Bittersweet (*Celastrus* spp.), with its tough, twisty vines, is also harvested in fall when the plant is dormant. For grasses and reeds, sweetgrass is typically cut in summer when its fragrant blades are at peak growth, while sedge and cattail, both wetland plants, are harvested in late summer or early fall when their fibrous leaves are mature but not overly dry.

BAMBOO, RIVER CANE, REEDS

Bamboo thrives in warm climates, river cane is native to North American riverbanks, and reeds are common in wetlands worldwide. Regional considerations for availability may dictate which material is most practical. Bamboo, river cane, and reeds are excellent materials for basket making due to their strength, flexibility, and availability. Each requires specific preparation to ensure pliability and durability, and the best harvest time depends on the plant's growth cycle. Most materials require soaking (vines, reeds) or drying (grasses, bark) to make them pliable or stable for weaving. Some, like willow or rattan, are soaked for hours to days.

Below is a detailed explanation of how to prepare these materials and when to harvest them.

BAMBOO

Bamboo is best harvested when mature, typically after 3–5 years of growth, depending on the species (e.g., *Phyllostachys* or *Bambusa* spp.). In tropical or subtropical climates, it can be cut year-round, but late fall to early winter is ideal in temperate regions when sap content is lower, reducing the risk of mold or

cracking during drying. Bamboo is harvested when mature, typically year-round in tropical climates, while rattan, a palm stem, is collected based on commercial processing schedules but is best when mature and flexible.

1. Cutting: Select straight, mature culms (stems) with a diameter suitable for basketry (1–2 inches for structural elements, thinner for weaving). Cut at the base, just above a node, using a saw or sharp pruning shears.
2. Cleaning: Remove leaves and side branches. Scrape off the outer green skin if a smoother texture is desired.
3. Splitting: Split the culms lengthwise into strips using a knife or bamboo splitter. For finer weaving, further split into thinner strands.
4. Drying: Air-dry the strips in a shaded, well-ventilated area for 1–2 weeks to prevent warping. Avoid direct sunlight, which can cause brittleness.
5. Soaking: Before weaving, soak the dried strips in water for several hours (or overnight) to make them pliable. Some weavers boil the strips briefly to increase flexibility. Bamboo's hard, smooth surface makes it ideal for both structural ribs and woven elements in Asian-style baskets. Commercially processed bamboo strips are also available, requiring only soaking before use.

RIVER CANE

River cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*), a native North American bamboo-like grass, is best harvested in late fall to early winter (November–February) when the plant is dormant, and sap levels are low. This timing minimizes damage to the plant and ensures the cane is less brittle.

River cane is culturally significant in Native American basketry, especially among Southeastern tribes like the Cherokee. It's slightly more flexible than bamboo but requires careful splitting to avoid cracking.

1. Cutting: Choose straight, mature canes (3–6 feet tall, ½–1 inch in diameter). Cut near the base with pruning shears or a machete, avoiding young, green shoots.
2. Cleaning: Strip off leaves and small branches. Optionally, scrape the outer layer to remove the waxy coating for a smoother finish.
3. Splitting: Split the cane into strips using a knife or a specialized cane splitter. For finer basketry, split into thinner strands, often 1/8-inch wide.

4. Drying: Dry the strips in a shaded, airy location for 1–3 weeks to prevent mold. Bundle them loosely to maintain straightness.
5. Soaking: Soak the dried strips in warm water for 4–12 hours before weaving to restore flexibility. Some weavers add a small amount of vinegar to the water to prevent discoloration.

REEDS

Reeds (*Phragmites australis* or *Arundo donax*) are known for its tall hollow stems, such as common reed (*Phragmites australis*) or giant reed (*Arundo donax*), are best harvested in late fall to early winter (October–January) when the plant is dormant and the stems are sturdy. Corn husks, a byproduct of maize, are gathered in fall during the harvest season. Willow branches, a basketry staple, are cut in early spring or late fall when the sap flow allows for flexibility and easy peeling. Reeds are widely used in traditional basketry for its uniformity.

1. Cutting: Cut tall, straight stems (6–10 feet long) at the base using pruning shears or a sickle. Select stems that are firm and not overly woody.
2. Cleaning: Remove leaves and any soft, pithy sections. Cut the stems into manageable lengths (3–6 feet) for easier handling.
3. Splitting (Optional): For finer weaving, split thicker reeds lengthwise into flat strips using a knife or reed splitter. Thinner reeds can be used whole.
4. Drying: Dry the reeds in a shaded, well-ventilated area for 2–4 weeks, standing upright or laid flat to prevent warping. Properly dried reeds turn a golden or tan color.
5. Soaking: Soak dried reeds in water for 1–4 hours (or longer for thicker pieces) to make them pliable for weaving. Warm water speeds up the process. Reeds can also be steamed for extra flexibility.

Reeds are versatile for both coiled and woven baskets, often used in traditional European and American basketry. *Phragmites* is widely available in wetlands, but check local regulations, as it may be invasive in some areas.

GRASSES

Grasses include Sweetgrass (*Muhlenbergia filipes* or *Hierochloa odorata*), Sedge (*Carex* spp.), and Cattail (*Typha* spp.).

Sweetgrass is fragrant, fine grass with a soft texture, and generally harvested in

summer; dried or used fresh. Sweetgrass was commonly used in Native American basketry, especially in coiled baskets.

Sedge is a a tough, fibrous grass-like plant found in wetlands, best harvested in late summer; dried for weaving. Sedge is considered durable and often used for twined or plaited baskets.

Cattails have a Broad, flat leaves from wetland plants, generally harvested in late summer or fall; dried or soaked before use. Cattails are versatile for both coiled and woven baskets.

MAIZE & CORN HUSKS

Maize/Corn Husks (*Zea mays*) Flexible, abundant material from corn plants. The best time of year for harvesting is in fall; dried and soaked before weaving. Husks are common in coiled or braided baskets.

TREE BARK, WILLOW, RATTAN

Bark, such as birch, cedar, or elm, is harvested in spring when the sap flows, making it easier to peel thin, flexible strips. These seasonal guidelines ensure that each material is gathered at its peak for optimal use in basket weaving. Thin, flexible strips from tree bark, such as birch (*Betula* spp.) , cedar (*Thuja* spp.), or juniper can be used for basket weaving.

These materials are best harvested in spring when sap flows, then properly dried and stored. To make them pliable or stable for weaving, willow or rattan are soaked for hours to days, Bark, Willow and Rattan are used for decorative elements or sturdy woven bases, even seats on chair frames.

Willow (*Salix* spp.)

- Long, flexible branches that are a staple in basketry.
- Harvested in early spring or late fall; soaked to enhance flexibility.
- Used for both structure and weaving, especially in European-style baskets.

Rattan (*Calamus* spp.)

- Flexible, woody palm stems, often commercially processed.
- Available as round or flat strips; soaked for pliability.
- Common in modern basketry for its uniformity and strength.

Conclusion

Harvesting natural materials for hand-woven baskets is like going on a hilarious treasure hunt with Mother Nature as your sassy guide! In late summer, wrestle fragrant sweetgrass and cattails from swampy hangouts—watch those muddy boots! Come fall, scoop up pine needles like you’re prepping for the world’s coziest pine-scented pillow fight. Spring’s your cue to charm willow branches and birch bark into submission, while late fall and winter have you playing vine tug-of-war with wisteria, grape, and river cane, all begging to be your rustic masterpiece. Kudzu and honeysuckle? Those sneaky vines are practically throwing themselves at you in spring or fall! Bamboo and reeds, snipped in cooler months, are like nature’s bendy straws, ready for action. Just snip, soak, and cackle as you dry grasses in the shade or dunk vines in warm water—voilà, you’re the basket-weaving wizard, turning nature’s chaos into epic, handcrafted swag. Who knew getting dirty could be this much fun?