

A box of secrets

A mix of materials

By Babeth Ollivier

In this tutorial for children by Babeth, she proposes to mix sewn, coil basketry (in pine needles and rush) with a band of decorative birch bark, which peels off all on its own without harming the tree in the month of June.



Materials

Green rush, dry rush (for sewing), raffia pine needles (or string or lime tree bast*), birch bark, a hazel stick and a length of honeysuckle vine.

Tools

Knitting needle, a bodkin or awl

*Bast - the fibrous threads obtained from wood phloem.

Spiral base

1 - Take several pine needles (a bundle!).



2 - Wet a length of rush to make it supple. Place it over the centre of the bundle with the end sticking out by a few centimeters.



3 - Pass the rush round the bundle and over the first turn to trap it in place.



4 - Wrap the rush round the bundle several times.



5 - Fold the left hand end of the bundle in to start the spiral.



6 - With the bodkin or awl, make a hole in the end of the bundle to sew the end and maintain the spiral shape.



7 - For the first 2 turns, sew back through the same hole and keep the start of the spiral tight.



8 - After the first 2 turns start to sew on an angle through the preceding turn. Add new needles to the bundle regularly.



9 - To join 2 lengths of rush, insert the new length through the same hole as the old one such that the 2 lengths cover each other.



10 - Fold the end of the new length and slide it behind the old one. Sew with the two lengths together to hold them firmly in place.



11 - Once you have reached the size that you want stop adding more needles to the bundle.



12 - Trap the rush behind the previous stitch.



Bark edges

13 - You can take the bark from a dead or living tree without damaging it.

It should be slightly longer (2-3 cm / 1 inch) than the circumference of the woven disc. With the aid of your bodkin or awl, pierce a series of holes along one edge of the bark.



14 - Add a piece of string, raffia, or as here of lime bast to a needle.



15 - Start to sew first of all with the piece of birch bark.



16 - Next sew to the bundle of pine needles, preferably behind the rush stitches.



17 - Continue round the edge of the base.



18 - Cross the two ends of the bark over each other.

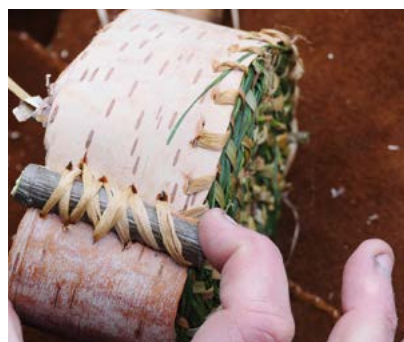


19 - Where they overlap, add a split piece of hazel as a reinforcement.



20 - Sew the piece of hazel to the birch bark... Sew up and then down to create a cross pattern.

Note: If the bark is not long enough you can make a join by overlapping two pieces by 5 cm (2 inches).



21 - To reinforce the upper edge of the bark, sew a length of honeysuckle to the inner edge to stiffen it.

