

May 2017 – Volume 20

Page 1:

Better Late than Never

Page 2-3:

Going Au Naturel with  
Philodendron Sheaths

Page 4:

Patterns Available on my  
Website or in my Etsy shop.



Please remember that when viewing the newsletter from your computer, that clicking on anything shown in blue will link you directly to the correct website referenced.

**Bright Expectations Baskets LLC**  
is weaving in either  
Mt. Vernon, IL or Naples, FL

Becky Bechtel

Phone: 618.316.1838

E-mail: [beckybechtel@gmail.com](mailto:beckybechtel@gmail.com)

[www.BrightExpectationsBaskets.com](http://www.BrightExpectationsBaskets.com)

[www.BrightExpectations.Etsy.com](http://www.BrightExpectations.Etsy.com)

[www.facebook.com/BrightExpectations](http://www.facebook.com/BrightExpectations)

## Who is Going to Teach?

I don't like to be late. I don't like other people to be late. So I'm not totally thrilled with myself for sending out a newsletter a week late. But here I am and here it is. I know it's a personal deadline and it's not like you all are sitting on the edge of your seats waiting but still, I apologize.

Most of my hold-up though has been pretty exciting AND basket weaving related though. I allow myself a certain amount of "administrative time" in the early mornings. I am working on patterns, the newsletter, emails, websites, etc. But for the past few weeks I've had a focus on the Teacher Applications for the 2018 Weaving in the Sunshine State basket weaving retreat.

The Teacher Proposals were due on April 30<sup>th</sup> and I received right at 200 options for classes. I'm going to tell you that's a LOT to process. The review committee has had their work cut out for them choosing the best selection to offer and it has been no easy task. By next month's newsletter I'll be able to reveal the list of teachers. I can tell you this ... it's going to be an *amazing* event.

## Where Do They Come From?



Most people think of Philodendrons as the house plant with the trailing vines. In south Florida this is the most prevalent variety that you will see and they grow EVERYWHERE. While you may see advertised for sale Philodendron sheaths that are 12" in length, we may have them that are easily twice that. And they are everywhere you look just for the picking. Harvesting is easy and you can normally walk along manicured lawns and just lift the brown sheaths discarded from the new growth stalks. Read on to see my latest project – *Going Au Naturel*.

**Did you know that you can access back issues of "The Reed Reader"?** If you'd like to read any of the newsletters you missed or share back issues with a friend, just click here ...

[www.BrightExpectationsBaskets.com/Newsletter](http://www.BrightExpectationsBaskets.com/Newsletter)

# Go Au Naturel with Philodendron Sheaths

Philodendron sheaths have been used to decorate and accent gourds and pine needle coiled baskets forever. But what about just on regular reed baskets? You don't see it as much but in my opinion, it's just as striking.

There's a bit of background here for the newbies. I made a New Year's resolution to keep branching out this year, trying new things, and getting out of my comfort zone. And I have to be honest ... my mind is NEVER idle. If I had a list of my "want to do projects", it would take up volumes. My husband also refers to me as "frugal" which in layman's terms, means I'm cheap, cheap, cheap when I can be.

So when I combined my thriftiness and my innovativeness, I decided to explore the less expensive, or au naturel accents rather than the store bought variety.

Philodendrons have always intrigued me. My search on the world wide web revealed that the sheaths are sold for on average a buck a piece! We live in a community in south Florida where our landscaping is about 15 years old and it's due to be replaced. And it's FULL of mature philodendrons. I discovered that these are the same variety that I saw on Etsy, Ebay, and websites. I looked outside and thought "I'm living in a gold mine!". Now the cogs were turning and I just needed to figure out what to do to get them from the plant to the basket in the best manner possible. I didn't want my hard work of weaving to dry up, get brittle, and simply crumble away. Here's the process that my research has revealed and the steps I took to accomplish having beautiful philodendron sheaths as basket accents.



I gathered about 15 of the sheaths from the plants right outside my front door. My research said to first clean them. Using a concoction of a squirt of Dawn (or the knock off variety) dish washing detergent and a ¼ cup (more or less) of ammonia in a sink that had 2-3 gallons of hot water, I let the sheaths soak for two hours (while I went to Hobby Lobby 😊). When I returned home (less a few dollars 😞), the sheaths were softened significantly and considering the floating debris in the water, much cleaner. I rinsed each sheath while gently rubbing any remaining dirt from each.

From what I had gathered, glycerin was the key to keeping the sheaths from getting brittle. The next soaking of the sheaths had again, 2-3 gallons of hot water, and I added about ½ cup of glycerin (from my Hobby Lobby shopping experience) to the bath. Note that glycerin is sold in both baking and soap making departments. The food grade glycerin is more expensive and I deemed, not necessary. Using my 40% off coupon, this 8 oz. bottle cost me about \$3.

I used a bucket now and a bowl filled with water to weight the sheaths down. This soaking I let last overnight.







When removed from the water, the sheaths now had a leather like feel and were quite supple and pliable. I placed the sheaths on my Sham-Wow (I have no idea how I ended up with Sham-Wows) to dry.

After the sheaths had dried, they were definitely not as dry and brittle as they were when they came off the plant. I was feeling pretty good about the success at this point.

Now it's time to weave a basket.

In a nutshell, here's the pattern that I used – it's a basic market basket on a wood base. Nothing fancy.

8 x 12 Oval Wood Base - stained (Minwax Early American) and polyurethane sealed (Minwax Rub On Poly)

8" Round Top Push In Handle

40 – 1/2" FF Natural Spokes @12" each

2 Rows – Chase Weave #2 Round Natural to Set Spokes

7 Rows – 1/4 FF Natural (1<sup>st</sup> row is OVER the center handle spoke)

3 Rows – Triple Twine #1 Sea Grass with Step Up on Each Row

7 Rows – 1/2 FF Dyed Green Reed (color shown is Jade Green from [www.GinasBaskets.com](http://www.GinasBaskets.com))

3 Rows – Triple Twine #1 Sea Grass with Step Up on Each Row

6 Rows – 1/4 FF Natural

1 Row – 1/2 FF Natural (Rim Row – should be OVER the handle spoke)

Cut and tuck spokes. Place handle. Rim with 5/8 FO Natural using 1/4" Flat Braided Sea Grass as Rim Filler. Lash with 3/16 FO Natural. Arrange philodendron sheaths as you choose prior to lashing the basket.

I chose to tuck the ends of my philodendron sheaths into the sea grass triple twining and double knot the area where they crossed in the center.

I then used Weavers Stain in Walnut with a fairly heavy coat. It was the last of the can and if you've used Weavers Stain before, you will know that often the last of the can is way darker than the first regardless of how much you shake it, store it, or whatever. You just deal with it and know to expect it. Here's my finished basket.



I actually really do like how the philodendron sheaths took on a very shiny appearance after the Weavers Stain. However, I would no longer consider the sheaths plyable and soft, but I also would not consider them brittle. I would not have a huge worry about damaging the sheaths with average usage. Of course, I would also not stack anything on them or wedge the basket between something with pressure on them. But they are stable.

Would I do this same technique again? Definitely! I love the natural element it adds to the basket giving it a unique flair.

The philodendron sheaths we have in south Florida are very large by comparison to most I have seen on the internet. If you would like some untreated ones and will be at the 2018 Weaving in the Sunshine State retreat in January, let me know and I'll grab some for you.

Or maybe I'll just bring a box of them for whoever would like to try their hand at weaving with them.



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# Sampling of Bright Expectations Basket Patterns

*Clicking on any PICTURE will connect you to the pattern listing.*

