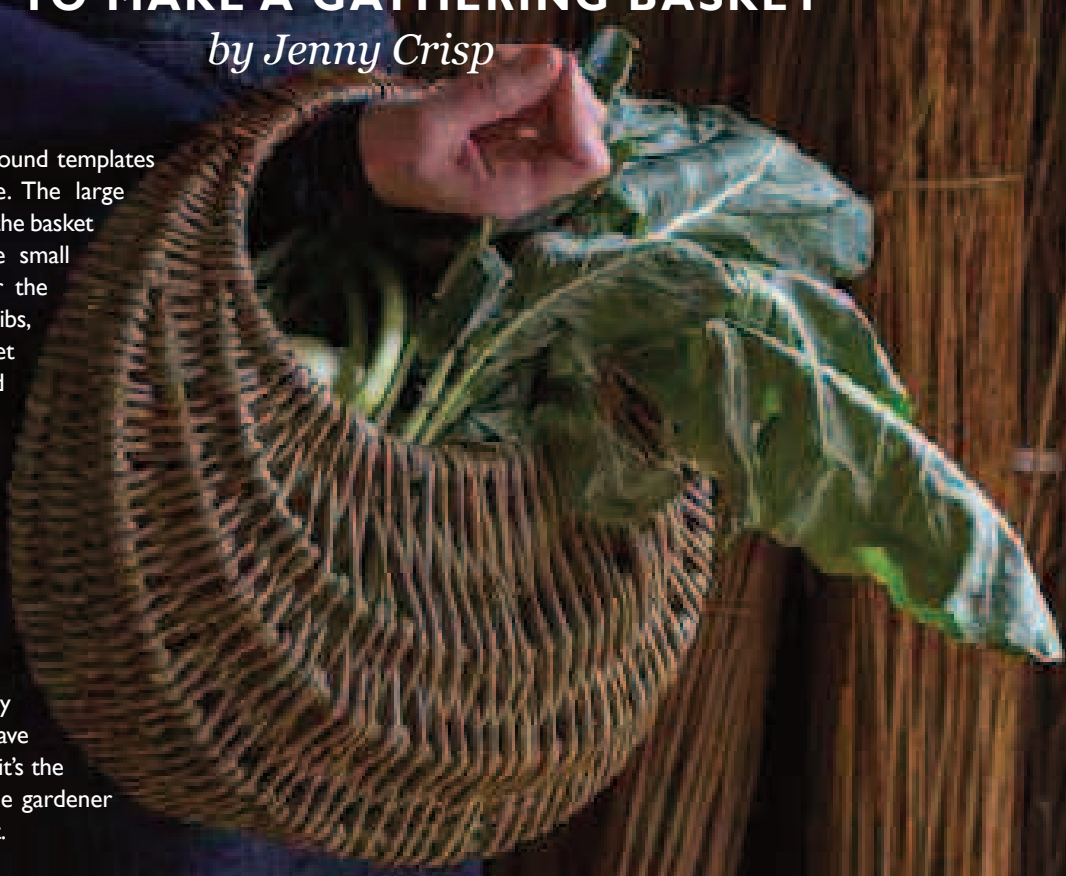


HOW TO MAKE A GATHERING BASKET

by Jenny Crisp

This basket begins with four round templates that meet and make the handle. The large templates form the base on which the basket sits firmly on a surface and the small templates create the opening for the handle. For my basket I added six ribs, but if you wanted to make a basket with a greater volume you could add more ribs. I have seen some very old photographs of groups of ladies chatting in a French market while proudly holding some very large, stunning versions of this basket. Everybody's grandmother had one of these in the 1940s and '50s, and they were carried to town to hold the grocery shopping. You see them a lot in antiques shops, and they carry fond memories for many of us. I have called mine a Gathering Basket, as it's the perfect size for the keen vegetable gardener to harvest enough for a family feast.



METHOD

1 Lay the 4 templates on top of each other, with the 2 small frames on the outside. It's very important not to have any of the template joints at the top where the handle is going to be. Also, to be sure that the weight of the frames is balanced, place the joints of the templates in opposite directions, as shown.

2 When you are happy with the positions, draw a mark on all templates to establish where the centre of the handle will be and put some tape either side of this. Line up the marks and tap a long panel pin through all of the hoops at this point. This helps to secure the 4 templates so you can start to weave.

3 Using 2 of the shortest rods, link the tips around each other and lay that join on the marks made.

4 With 1 of the rods, begin to wrap around all 4 templates as tightly and neatly as you can manage, trapping the tip of the rod inside your wrapping as you go.

5 Wrap 1 rod several times until you have 25cm (10in) of the rod left. To secure this rod, part the 2 large templates by squeezing them apart over your knee. This will create a gap wide enough for you to secure the butt firmly between the 2 large templates.

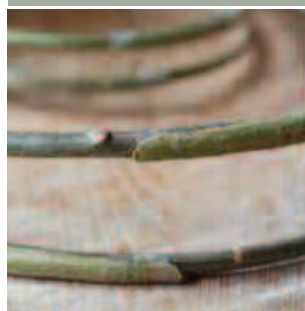
6 Repeat with the second rod, working in the other direction. There's a lot to keep control of at this stage, so I use tape to add some dry spacing sticks to help retain the shape as I weave.

For the template: 4 Round Templates – 2 x 18cm (7in) diameter and 7.5mm (1/3in) thick at the butt, 2 x 32cm (12 1/2in) diameter and 1cm (1/2in) thick at the butt, made from green or semi-green willow, then dried before use

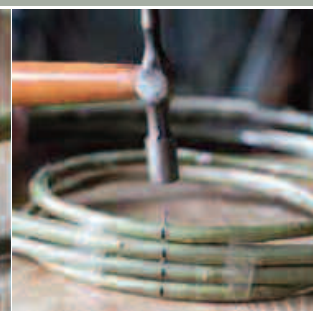
For the weaving: soaked or semi-green willow, 6 sticks 70cm (28in) long, 1cm (1/2in) thick at the butt for the ribs
10 rods 120cm (4ft) long
10 rods 150cm (5ft) long
50 rods 180cm (6ft) long

Tools

basket maker's knife, Sellotape (Scotch tape), pin hammer, panel pins, bodkin, secateurs, beater, a bottle/wooden pole to wrap the final weavers around for flexibility



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7 You now work on separating the 4 templates into 2 pairs. Still using the short weavers, tuck the tip into the place where the previous butt ended. Think of the weaver as a continuous length of weaving: this will help you understand where to place it. As you weave with the thin end of this new rod, start to separate the templates into 4 by squeezing the weaver between the large and small templates. The aim is to separate all 4 templates with the weaver. Turn it around and repeat on the other side of the handle. Continue to weave on both sides with the remaining shortest weavers. For this shape it's hard to find a regular pattern for your weaving. The only rule is not to have butts or tips ending or starting on the small round templates as this is the edge of the basket, and they would be vulnerable.

8 When you have woven all 10 rods you will find that the gaps between the templates have widened, which gives you room in your weave to add more frame. You need 6 ribs to fill the spaces to be woven – an extra 2 in each of the 3 spaces. On the butt end of one of the sticks cut a short slype on the belly and insert this rib into the weaving next to the small template. This is when your bodkin comes in handy. If you can't get the slip into the weave easily, push the bodkin in firmly and wiggle it about. The rod will now go in much more easily.

9 Judge the length you need to make the first rib by offering it up to the weaving on the opposite side of the basket and cut a second slype on the belly. Insert that into the weaving on the other side, again using the bodkin if necessary. You will need to do a little shaping and moulding to encourage the rib to curve evenly. (See Step 1 of Round Template, page 36.) Add in the remaining 5 ribs on either side of each of the large templates.

10 Continue to weave with the finest of the 150cm (5ft) rods, again starting with the tip in the exact place where the butt finished. Weave under and over all the templates and newly added ribs, encouraging them all to separate as you go. This will feel very tight to begin with. The only pattern is when you add in a new weaver: always start with the tip and weave out to the butt. I always keep my joins on the inside of the basket as it looks a lot neater. Weave 5 rods on the first side and then 5 on the other side to help to keep the form even. As the gaps get larger, move on to weaving with the thicker 180cm (6ft) rods and remember to tap with your beater every so often; this will keep the basket strong.

11 When you have woven a number of rows you will notice that the small hoops are being woven up more rapidly than the larger part of the basket. At this stage we need to change the weaving pattern to ensure that the larger part of the basket is filled. To do this you weave a shorter row. So instead of weaving to the small template you weave to the outer rib only and then turn back to weave to the other side. On the next row you weave back and forth to the second rib only; on the third row you weave up to the 2 larger templates only. Then you weave back up to the small template again and repeat.

12 You will notice that by using this pattern the larger volume of the basket will begin to fill more quickly without cramming up the space on the small templates. Continue to do this until you have an even strap of unwoven basket. When the 2 sides have been woven evenly, return to the original weave pattern of weaving all the way cross from small template to small template to complete the basket. As the gap gets smaller it gets harder to weave, so refer to Step 5 of Fruit Basket (see page 67) to help you handle the willow in a small space. Try not to have all your butt-to-tip joins in the same place. Weave so the rods start and end in different places: this will keep the weaving strong. To finish, try not to end with a double row. Trim all the ends. Reset the basket on a flat surface while it is damp so it sits firmly.

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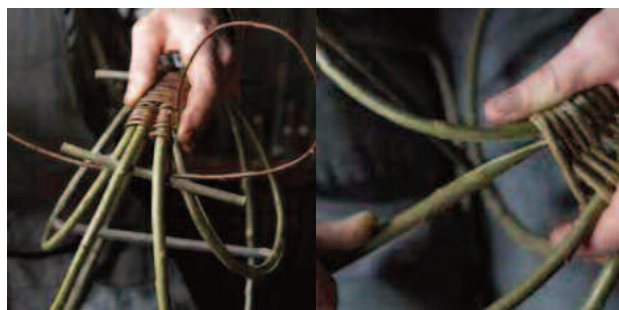
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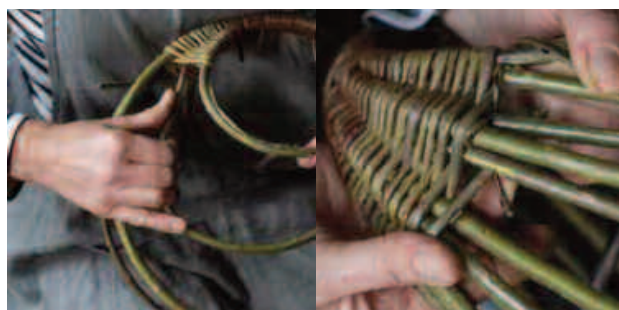
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This project is an excerpt from **Willow – A Guide to Growing and Harvesting plus 20 Beautiful Woven Projects** by Jenny Crisp, published by Jacqui Small at £20.00, available from www.quartoknows.com