

Coiled Basketry (Pine Needle) Notes

Materials List

By
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1. **Bundle of dry and bundle of wet long pine needles** Used for the body of the basket
2. **Waxed lined thread, 3 or 4 ply** This is used for sewing the basket together
3. **Tapestry Needles (size 18)** These are used to sew the basket together
4. **Opaque drinking straws of different diameters cut into 1 inch lengths**
These are used as a gauge for your coil.
5. **Plastic curtain rings in different size diameters** These are used for the start of the basket
6. **Piece of a rubber glove finger** Used to grip the sewing needle when it is difficult to pull through a stitch.
7. **Spring clothes pin** To clip the last stitch when you stop working on an unfinished basket
8. **Scissors** For cutting
9. **Leather scraps** Used to cover the outside bottom of the basket
10. **Modge Podge Glue** Used to paint on loose stitches to tighten them
11. **Non-water soluble fabric glue** Used to glue leather on the basket
12. **Scotch tape or masking tape** A tiny piece of tape folded over the end of the thread can be used to push the thread through the eye of the sewing needle
13. **Embellishments** Examples are beads, seed, shells, colored thread

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAKING COILED PINE NEEDLE BASKETS

Gather pine needles from the ground. Only take fresh green pine needles from a cut or broken branch. The needles should be fairly straight and without bumps or twists. After gathering your pine needles you should wash them in an antibacterial soap. I use liquid dish soap. Then spread them out on paper to dry. If you are in a hurry to dry the needles, you can use a blow dryer. This process sometimes brings out the oil in the pine needles and makes them more shiny. Some of the wet pine needles may be set aside, wrapped in a wet paper towel and rolled up in a plastic bag. This can be kept in the refrigerator to use for starting your basket.

If you find you need to start a new basket and forgot to prepare moist pine needles, you can do it in a hurry. Just put a bundle of dry pine needles into an oblong baking dish. Boil some water and pour it over these dry needles. Let it sit for about 15 minutes. Depending upon the thickness of the pine needles, they should be moist enough to use.

Next take your waxed linen thread and cut about one yard. Thread a tapestry needle and tie the other end of the thread to a plastic ring. You want to cover the ring with waxed linen thread. This is done by sewing a blanket stitch or button hole stitch around the outside of the ring leaving the center open. Each knot formed by a stitch should be on the outside part of the ring. Push stitches close together so they cover the ring completely.

Take some moist pine needles, cut off the nubs and insert the pine needle nub end first into the piece of drinking straw. Use larger diameter straws for bigger baskets and smaller diameter straws for little baskets. Line your coil, formed by the pine needles in the straw up next to the knots on the outside of the ring. Proceed to sew over the coil away from you and then insert the sewing needle into a knot next to the coil and pull the sewing needle towards you. Pull this thread tight and you should see your first stitch wrapped around your first coil. Continue forming stitches in this way all around the ring making sure to add pine needles thick end first into the plastic straw always keeping the straw diameter full of pine needles.

If you are making a small basket, fewer stitches are needed. The basket is held together by friction so try to pull your thread tight especially since these moist pine needles will shrink when they dry and would result in loose stitches. After completing the first coil of pine needles around the ring, push the tail at the start of the coil up toward you. This can be cut off later or you can incorporate it into your coil as you go around the ring.

The second coil and all others are similar in that you bring the thread over the new coil and then stitch with the tapestry needle into the stitch below on the previous coil. You can stitch either into the middle of this stitch grabbing the stitch and some pine needles or just stitch right under the thread itself. Doing the latter should accentuate the shape of each coil. Continue in this way around and around adding coils. After several coils, gradually add dry pine needles to replace wet pine needles in the straw until the bottom

of your basket is the size you desire. When adding these dry pine needles insert them into the coil on the side closest to the previous coil. This will hide the ends and keep them from protruding. If you have ends sticking out, you can gently break them off when the basket is complete.

Next it is time to form the sides of the basket. Start gradually sewing the next coil on top of instead of next to the previous coil. If you form the sides coiling away from you the stitching on the outside of the basket will assume a barber pole curving line pattern. If you bring the sides of the basket up towards you and you are looking inside of the basket it will have a random stitch design on the outside and the curving line design will be on the inside of the basket. Shaping baskets depends on the tension of your stitches, the thickness of each coil and the angle in which you put your sewing needle into the stitch.

When adding a new thread to the old one you should first leave about two inches of the old thread coming out of the last stitch sewed. Take the threaded needle and put the needle as if to sew into the same stitch. Pull it all the way through until you have a short piece of that thread protruding from the side of this stitch away from you. You should have two pieces of thread extending from either side of this last stitch. Tie these together under the new coil and above the old one using a square knot. Try to hide the knot and twisted ends of thread between the old and the new coils.

When you want to end the basket make sure that all sides of the basket are even. You can do this by checking the bottom of the basket to see where you started to curve the sides up. If it is helpful, you can mark this point with a pin. Line up this spot with a place on the top edge of the basket. Working toward this spot, gradually decrease and taper your last coil. If necessary cut or break off pine needles that extend beyond this point. You want to have your ending show as little as possible. The end of your coil should line up with the spot on the bottom of the basket that you marked. Tie a single knot when reaching this point and then plunge the sewing needle down through several coils. Pull it out in a place on the inside of the basket. Cut your thread and look at your finished product.

Cut a piece of leather to fit the outside bottom of your basket and glue it on with non water soluble fabric glue. This gives a more finished look, supports the basket bottom, can hide any loose threads and protects the stitches on the bottom of the basket from wear.

A bead could be inserted into the hole in the ring on the inside bottom of the basket or the hole could be covered with a shell or other embellishment, whatever you want to do.

Now you have a completed basket. I hope you find as much joy and satisfaction in your creations as I do in mine.

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Basketry Resources

The Caning Shop (Thread, Sea Grass Pine Needles Basket supplies)
926 Gilman St
Berkeley, Ca
510.527-7718
www.caning.com

Matoska Trading Co (Thread and sinew)
800.926.6286
www.matoska.com

Arnie's Arts & Crafts
800.563.2356
www.arnies.com main store
<http://www.basketpatterns.com/> (Basketry supplies, thread, pine needles)
http://www.arnies.com/merchant/merchant.mv?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=bpcom&Product_Code=mall004 (Agate Base)

Land of Odds (Beads)
615.292.0610
<http://www.landofodds.com/>

www.basketmakers.org (Links, events & resources))

<http://babmbaskets.tripod.com/> (Local Basket Makers Guild)

Work Displayed at:
Northwoods Gallery
278 Main Street
Chester, CA 96020
530-258-3400

<http://www.northwoods-gallery.com/lkelleher.htm>