



Canary Island pine (*Pinus canariensis*) - Quality needles for baskets

**Sharing information, knowledge and techniques to provide
guidance, encouragement and inspiration
to those interested in the craft of Handweaving**

All aspects of the Olympia Weaver Guild purpose were met when Jim Shanower shared his knowledge of making pine needle baskets and more with the basket study group at Jan Green's home after a morning of basket making. Special thanks to the Guild for awarding a Hazel Pattison Education Grant for this event. Several members had tried a little pine needle basket work but Jim's techniques and quality unique baskets got them interested again. Terri Standley said "I see a different side of pine needle baskets... Keeping an open mind about a craft is sometimes difficult to do if you have had a less than wonderful experience with it but sometimes it just takes the right teacher or the right application to see it from a different perspective."

Do you remember the joy you had with your first weaving workshop and you went home and continued exploring the techniques? Jim Shanower shared this experience with the basket study group. Nancy Sedlacek said "I absolutely identified with Jim's first workshop response. That he felt such a connection to the weaving of the baskets that he worked intensely into the nights, and has continued to refine his technique, was very inspiring."



Created by Jim Shanower with Ponderosa pine needles (*Pinus ponderosa*), waxed linen, beads and ceramics - (JBLM) is the only place in Western Washington where Ponderosa pine grows natively.

Jim moved up from California and thought he would be in pine needle country but it turns out that the wetter the climate the shorter the pine needles grow. You will find longer needles in Eastern Washington or Oregon and California in the dryer climates. Needles that are ordered from the internet typically come from the South. To find the freshest brown needles run your hand down a branch and the dry needles will fall off into your palm. Needles should be able to twist without breaking. Giving your pine needles a glycerin bath treatment both for making the needles supple and shiny and for dying peaked Ardith Hamilton's interest. Jim shared with us the bath recipe.

Have you ever applied some unexpected consequences from expanding on what you knew on a new project. Jim applied the knowledge from unexpected consequences to the basket that won grand champion at the Thurston County Fair and Washington State Fair.

Vicki Booth was excited to find out Jim was one who had taken a Flo Hoppe Japanese basket class with her last spring and was fascinated to see how he had applied the knot techniques on rocks. Jim integrates many different mediums, grasses, artificial sinew, wire, Kumihimo braid, wood, nuts, rocks, buttons and beads. Jean Schwartz noted “I learned a lot about coiling and making centers for coiling that can be adapted to other materials.” More opportunities for future weaving with different mediums.

Nancy Sedlacek learned - “hints for success that I did not previously know about, but that make a marked difference in the outcome, are locking in stitches for stability and the use of beeswax to both preserve and stiffen the baskets. These highlight the critical importance of quality construction and appropriate last steps in finishing a project properly... these are useful reminders for any craftsperson in any medium.”

Jean Schwartz said “I learned that you have to have a passion for working with pine needles in order to spend all those tedious hours to make a basket. If you do, you can make a work of art.”

Who doesn't like a good tool. Several are going to ask their dentist for hygienist old picks after Jim shared his stash and how to use them. Most of the tools Jim used through were very common items that are probably in your home.

Since Jim knows his baskets can be used for holding many things including food he uses non-toxic “kids choice glue” which he finds adequately strong for baskets which will have other stabilizing products and techniques used on them.

One of the uses for glue is to attach cabochons etc. to leather that he uses to start the bottom of a basket.



Next steps include taking a class from Jim or to integrate what was learned into new projects. Jim was a good instructor. If you are looking for a different weaving direction please join us in the Basket Study Group where there are materials to get started. The group adapts to schedules so getting on the mailing list is the best way to get engaged. Send a note to Jan Green with your request. richandjangreen@comcast.net