

#### Willow Resources:

Dunbar Gardens, Mt Vernon, Washington <dunbargardens.com> Cuttings for propagation

Willowglen Nursery, Decorah, Iowa <willowglen.com> Cuttings and dried willow for weaving

Books: Basketmaking in Ireland by Joe Hogan, The Handmade Basket Book, by Rebecca Board, The Complete Book of Basketry Techniques, By Sue Gabriel and Sally Goymer, Willow Basketry, by Bernard and Regula Verdet-Fierz

#### Propagation and Cultivation:

Make cuttings from base of 1 to 2-year-old rods, 9 to 10 inches in length. Make cuttings in winter, while plants are dormant. Store cuttings in cool, damp conditions until planting.

Prepare planting site ahead of time. Site should be well cultivated and free of sod and weeds. Willow will grow in many types of soil, but does not like standing water or marshy sites.

Plant by inserting cuttings into the ground, leaving only 1 or 2 buds above ground. Space cuttings 9 to 12 inches apart in the row, depending on size of variety. Space rows 24 to 32 inches apart.

Provide water, if needed, until willow is established. Protect leaves from late frost. Keep willow weeded or use mulch to reduce weed competition.

#### Harvest and storage:

Cut willow rods in November through February, after leaf-fall and while plants are dormant.

Use hand pruners or loppers for larger rods, and cut close to ground level.

Make clean cuts, on diagonal. Harvest when temperature is above freezing to avoid splintering of rods.

Sort and bundle by length and variety. Label each bundle by variety.

Dry and store willow in well-ventilated shelter, out of sunlight.

#### Preparation and Use:

Willow rods may be used "green", or freshly cut. This is common for garden structures and farm baskets. Willow shrinks in diameter as it dries, losing 1/3 its width, so weaving will become looser.

Dried willow must be soaked before using it to weave. Soaking time is roughly 1 day per linear foot of rod (a 3-foot rod requires 3 days of soaking). Warm water will speed things up, and very cold water slows things down.

After soaking, willow is "mellowed" so that it will become more pliable. Wrap bundles of soaked willow in damp (not soaking wet) towels or blankets. Cover with a tarp and allow to mellow 24 to 48 hours. Do not leave wrapped for more than 2 days.