

Vine Spoke Basket Construction

Materials must be flexible enough to tie in a knot.

Best vines are kudzu, wisteria, and akebia. Others may be serviceable.

Directions:

Cut 8 pieces of like thickness and flexibility for spokes. Weavers should be thinner than spokes, more pliable, and several feet long. Trim off any roots, tendrils and branches.

Make spoke pieces long enough to go down one side of the desired basket, across the base, up the other side plus at least 6" on each end.

Lay 4 pieces flat and parallel, then lay the other 4 across them at the middles.

Fold a weaver in half, creating a loop, and place it around 4 of the spoke ends, sliding it into the center as far as it will go.

Twining with the weaver: take the end on top and push it down close to the middle. Bring the lower end up and bend it at a 90 degree angle, continuing clockwise or counterclockwise. Bring the now bottom weaver end around below the upper, surrounding the next 4 spoke ends.

Push upper down, bring lower up, bend them the next 90 degree angle. Repeat till you have gone around the basket twice. Keep slack out of the weaver as much as possible.

Spread the spoke ends apart in pairs and twine around the basket twice.

Spread the spoke ends apart as singles and twine around the basket twice.

You can continue to twine around the spokes in this way, bend up the spokes when the bottom is done, and build up the sides.

Weaving goes faster and is simpler. It is almost but not quite as strong as twining.

Whether you are twining or weaving, press the work tightly down towards the base. Do not let it spiral upwards or outwards.

To weave, end the paired twining pieces. Cut an extra piece of spoke to a sharp point, locate a spot where two spokes are the furthest apart, and insert the extra spoke piece along on original spoke.

Now you have an odd number so that when you weave, the rows will alternate. You could get an odd number by cutting a spoke out, but that might leave too few spokes to space them close enough for strong weaving. You could find the thickest spoke and split it to get an extra spoke, but often that leaves two thin, floppy spokes.

Insert one end of the weaver somewhere, and lay it behind one spoke, in front of the next, etc, and keep going till the weaver gets too short. Tuck the end in somewhere and stick in a new one, and keep going.

Build up the sides till you have at least 6 inches of each spoke protruding above above the horizontal weaving.

To braid the rim, bend a spoke at a 90 degree angle and tuck it behind its neighbor, leaving the end sticking out. Do this all the way around the rim. When you have gone all the way around, make a little space under a tucked in spoke for the last spoke to fit through.

Take a spoke end, stretch it past one more spoke and tuck it into the little triangular space at the top of a folded spoke. Repeat all the way around till all the spoke ends are pointing into the basket. Make sure all steps of the rim braiding are pulled tight.

You may cut off the protruding ends but do not cut them shorter than about an inch until the basket is dry and all shrinking is done. The timing depends on temperature and humidity.