

Farewell Virginia Basket #8982

by Beth Hester



Size: 10" x 14" Height: 13"

The Kentucky Folklife Program bids farewell and best wishes to Virginia Siegel as she continues her professional journey in Arkansas! Thanks, Virginia, for your dedication and contributions to Kentucky's people and culture.

This generously-sized basket was created to celebrate Virginia! It sports two of the handcrafted white oak swing handles made in our shop in Allen County, Kentucky. Standing 13" tall, it's constructed with reed materials, natural and dyed, upon a wooden base. A strong basket that's perfect for carrying loads of materials and treasures.

Materials/Supplies:

8" x 12" Oblong Slotted Wooden Base	1 base	5/8" Flat Reed	42 ft. Stakes
10" Oak Swing Handles/Ears	2 handles	1/4" Flat Oval	24 ft. Weavers
1/2" DYED Flat Reed*	31 - 34 ft. Stakes & Weavers	1/2" Flat Reed	75 ft. Weavers
1/4" Flat Reed	18 ft. Lashing & Weavers	1/2" Flat Oval	4 ft. Inside Rim
1/2" Half Round (Split) Reed	4 ft. Outside Rim	#3 Seagrass	4 ft. Rim Filler
3/8" Flat Reed	4 ft. Weaver (Rim Row)		

**Note: 1 bundle (1/4 lb.) of any color of 1/2" wide Multi-colored dyed reed is ample dyed material for this project. Choose from Woodhues, Harvest, Amish Mix, Greens, or Blues. Woodhues & Blues pictured here.*

Hints in working with Reed

1. When soaking your Flat Reed and Seagrass, soaking 1 or 2 minutes in warm water is usually long enough to make reed flexible. Soak the Flat Oval and Half Round Reed for 5 to 10 minutes in hot water.
2. Soak dyed reed separately, rinse well and wipe with towel before using. A bit of salt in the water helps minimize the dye bleeding.
3. Do not over soak your reed; it will become mushy.
4. Flat Reed has a smooth side and a rough side. You can determine the rough side by sharply bending a wet piece of reed in half. The rough side will usually fray or splinter more than the smooth side.
5. As you weave you'll want to maintain an equal space between stakes by gently adjusting the stakes to keep them vertical and to maintain a circumference of 39¹/₂ inches at the top of your basket, (19³/₄" from center stake on one side to the center stake on the opposite side; 9⁷/₈" from center stake on one side to the center stake on one end).
6. When weaving the basket sides, place rows close together and do not leave spaces between the rows of weaving. Weave each row independently, overlapping the ends of each weaver across 4 stakes, concealing each weaver's ends behind a stake. Begin rows at various locations, assuring that the overlapped areas are evenly distributed around the basket.
7. Reed should be completely dry before being stored.
8. Sand your rims prior to soaking.

Setting up the Base & Stakes

Sand your slotted wooden base and apply the finish of your choice; allow the finish to dry completely. Cut 28 pieces (stakes) 16" long from 5/8" Flat Reed and cut 12 stakes 16" long from DYED 1/2" Flat Reed.

Trace the outline of the base onto a piece of paper. Cut out the shape; fold in half and in half again. Unfold and, using the crease lines as your template, transfer the 4 crease lines to the base by marking the edge of the base with a pencil. Determine which side of your base is for the inside of the basket and mark the inside with a slight pencil mark or, temporarily, with a piece of tape. Place the rough side of each stake to the inside of the basket.

Notes: Soak all the stakes before inserting them into the base's slot. Space stakes a scant 1/4" apart. *If the stakes are a bit thick for the width of your slot you may want to sand the slot and/or pinch the ends of the stakes with pliers to flatten them before inserting. Insert stakes as deeply as the slot depth allows.*

--Insert a 5/8" Flat stake at the center of each of the 4 base pencil marks, (rough side of reed to inside of basket). See Photo 1. Make a pencil mark on both sides of the free end of each of these 4 stakes; you'll use these reference marks later as you weave up the sides of your basket.



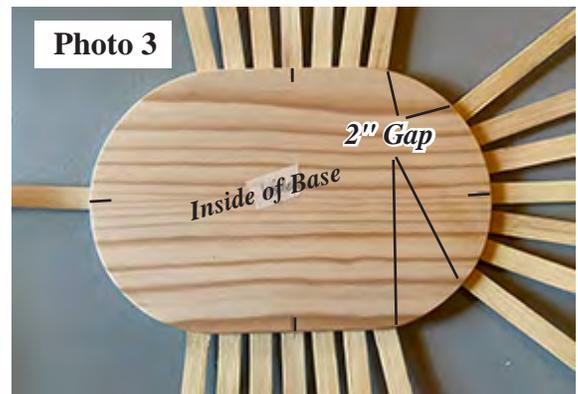
Mark the free end of each of these 4 stakes.

--After inserting the four 'centered' stakes, insert three additional 5/8" stakes to each side of these 'centered' stakes; you'll have a total of 7 stakes in each of the 4 areas. See Photos 2 & 3.

--You now have 28 (twenty-eight) 5/8" Flat stakes (four sets of 7 stakes) inserted with a wider gap of space (about a 2" gap) between each set of 7 stakes.



Space stakes a scant 1/4" apart.



You'll have about a 2" gap between each set of 7 stakes.



--Insert (and evenly space) three 1/2" Flat Dyed stakes in each of the four wider gaps of space (12 dyed 1/2" stakes total).

--The total number of 5/8" natural and 1/2" Dyed stakes is 40. See Photo 4. Adjust stake placement if needed so that all stakes are fairly evenly spaced apart.

Weaving Your Basket

Soak a piece of 1/4" Flat Oval and weave around one row, placing the weaver's flat side to the inside of the basket. As you weave this first row, leave the stakes laying flat on your table and adjust the tension on the weaver so that the weaver lays tightly against the base with each and every stitch. Do not attempt to hold your stakes upright at this point. Cut the weaver to overlap the start and finish of this row across 4 stakes, hiding the ends. See Photo 5.



Photo 5

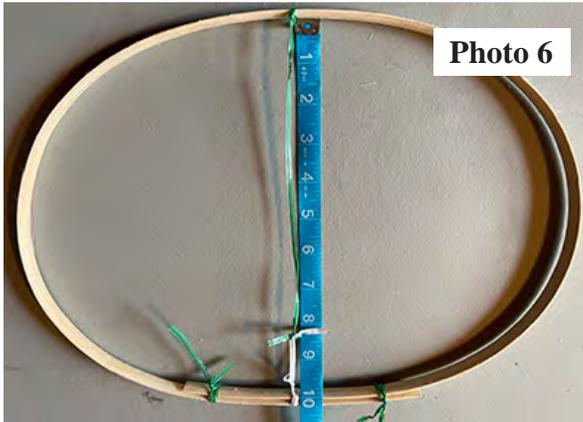


Photo 6

Sizing/Rim Guide

Sizing/Rim Guide: Before weaving further, make a Sizing/Rim Guide by cutting a 46" length of 1/2" Flat Oval for your inside rim. Soak the rim material and then work out some of the stiffness. Overlap the ends of the rim about 6.5" and shape it (flat side out) into a circle with a circumference of 39.5". Mark where the rims overlap with a pencil and firmly secure the overlapped area with a couple of twist ties or cable ties.

Draw the center of the rim together creating an oblong shape (like the shape of your base) that measures 10" across the center. Securely tie the rim to size across the 10" center with a strand of waxed linen thread, cord or twist ties. See Photo 6. Set Sizing/Rim Guide aside.

Dampen the stakes just above the weaving and gently roll each stake upward (rough side of stake to the inside of the basket). As you 'roll' the stakes upward, you will be stretching the stake's fibers just above the first row of weaving.

Next, bring the ends of all your stakes upward and place each stake inside the sizing/rim guide you've just made. Adjust the stakes and use clothespins to attach a few stakes to the guide. See Photo 7; the guide helps hold the stakes upward and it helps in shaping your basket.

Note: Review 'Hints' on page 1 to remind yourself about soaking material, overlapping weavers and locating the start of each row.

With stakes held upward by the Sizing/Rim Guide, weave a row of 1/4" Flat Oval, overlapping the ends across 4 stakes. It may seem a bit awkward to weave with the Guide attached!

Now it's time to check that each stake is secure in the slot of the base. Push each stake, in turn, toward the slot to 're-seat' it as deep as possible into the slot.



Photo 7

With stakes remaining captured by the rim guide, weave a third row of 1/4" Flat Oval, adjusting the tension on the weaver to follow the curved shape of the stakes. Adjust your stakes as you weave, keeping the space between all stakes as equal as possible.

Pack rows of weaving by pushing rows downward, tightly against each other, leaving no spaces between rows of weaving. See Photo 8.

Measuring Tool: Create a measuring tool with a scrap of reed; cut the reed scrap so that it is 9 7/8" long. As you continue to weave, you'll use the measuring tool to check the distance between marked stakes (you'll measure from the **center** of one marked stake to the **center** of the next marked stake). The 'marked stakes' are those original 4 centered 5/8" stakes that you inserted into the base.



Using the measuring tool helps keep each quarter of the basket the same size and assures a good fit of the two white oak swing handles when you reach the top of the basket. Adjust the position of the stakes and the tension of the weavers as you weave to maintain a consistent measurement. Begin using the Measuring Tool after weaving 2 or 3 rows of 1/2" Flat.

I recommend pre-cutting all the remaining weavers of your basket to 45" long, **measuring accurately**. The 45" length gives you the length needed to complete the row with a 4-stake overlap and allows for about an inch to spare (except on the first two or three rows of 1/2" Flat where you will have a bit more to spare as your weaver rounds the curve of the basket before it reaches full circumference). To assure a good fit of the white oak swing handles at the top of the basket as well as a consistent size/shape up the tall sides of the basket, use the measuring tool often and keep track of the spare amount on each row that you trim off, reworking and adjusting each row as needed to maintain the weaver's desired length on each completed row.

If your stakes have become dry, rewet them by spraying with water. There is no need to rewet the area of your basket that is already woven; keep the wooden base dry at all times. Periodically rewet the stakes as needed.

Weave a total of 13 rows with 1/2" Flat natural reed (rough side of reed to the inside of the basket). As you weave, keep the stakes enclosed within the Rim/Sizing Guide to hold the stakes upright until you've woven a few rows. Remove the Rim/Sizing Guide, weave a few rows **using the Measuring Tool**, then **use the Rim/Sizing Guide** to check that your basket's circumference is the desired size. Continue to work, row by row, toward establishing and maintaining an even space between all stakes. Pack all rows as you weave them.

Adding Rows of Dyed Reed: After weaving 13 rows of 1/2" Flat natural reed the woven area of your basket measures about 8" tall. Pack the rows woven with natural reed well prior to weaving the dyed reed.

It's time to add color! Look at your available dyed materials and make a plan for adding a few rows of dyed reed. See a couple of examples in the photo on page 1 and also notice that above the 'band' of color, you will weave 2 or 3 rows of 1/2" Flat natural. When weaving the rows of dyed reed, take note of where the Swing Handles will be mounted and shy away from overlapping the weavers in these areas to make attaching the handles an easier job. Soak dyed reed separately, rinse well and wipe with a towel to minimize 'bleeding'. Pack rows of dyed reed as you weave.

With dyed rows woven and 2 or 3 natural rows woven above the dyed rows, you'll have 2.5" (or a bit more) of the stakes remaining unwoven; the woven rows of your basket will measure 12" - 13" in height.

Weave the final row of your basket with 3/8" Flat Reed; this is the rim row and will be completely covered by the basket's rims. You must have at least 2" of stakes remaining above the 3/8" Flat rim row. Pack all the rows.

Tucking over the Stakes: Soak stakes that extend above the top row for several minutes—do not rewet the woven sides of the basket. Identify each stake where the top row of weaver is on the inside of the basket; crease the stake tightly/snuggly against the top edge of the basket, trim stake to length, then tuck each of these stakes (tuck behind one row of weaving) to the inside of your basket. Cut all remaining stakes flush with the top of the basket. See Photo 9 showing the inside of the basket.



Attaching Handles

Inserting the White Oak Swing Handles is much easier if the sides of the basket are completely dry.

To attach the handles, one end of the handles' ears will be inserted along a stake behind some weavers on the outside of the basket and the other end of the ear will be inserted behind weavers on the inside of the basket.

Determine the best position for the handles so they rest along the top edge of the basket or extend beyond the basket a bit. The handles will most likely fit into the basket along the second stake to the right and the second stake to the left of center on the long sides. Determine the best placement for your handles and mark the top row of each chosen stake with a pencil. See photo on page 1 and Photo 10.

If you haven't already done so, place the handcrafted ears into their handles.

Locate a weaver on the outside of a chosen stake that's about 2" from the top edge of your basket. To attach the handle you'll work one end of the ear behind this weaver on the outside and the other end of the same ear behind a weaver on the inside of the basket, pushing the ear downward behind one row of weaving at a time to the proper depth until the lower edge of the ear's notch is level with the lower edge of the top row of weaving.

If needed use a packing tool to pry the weaver away from the stake, opening up a space for the ear to fit, pushing the ear downward, between the weaver and the stake, row by row, first on the inside then on the outside of your basket. See Photo 10.

Insert this handle's other ear and double check the handle's placement. Align the lower edge of both ear notches with the lower edge of the top row of your basket. Attach the second handle to your basket and check placement. See Photo 10.

Rims

Measure the outside of your basket around the top row, placing your measuring tape into each ear notch, to determine the basket's circumference. Cut a length of 1/2" Half Round Reed 5" longer than the circumference for your outside rim. Untie the 1/2" Flat Oval Rim/Sizing Guide that you made earlier and cut it 2" longer than your basket's circumference.

Sand the rounded side of each rim.



Soak the rims 10 minutes in warm water. Check the rims for flexibility; the heavier-weight outside rim may need to soak an additional 10 minutes.

After soaking, "work" some of the stiffness out of the rim pieces by gently bending them along their length, back and forth from end to end, stretching the fibers. See Photo 11 of "working" the rims. *Thanks, Joyce Lantz ;)*

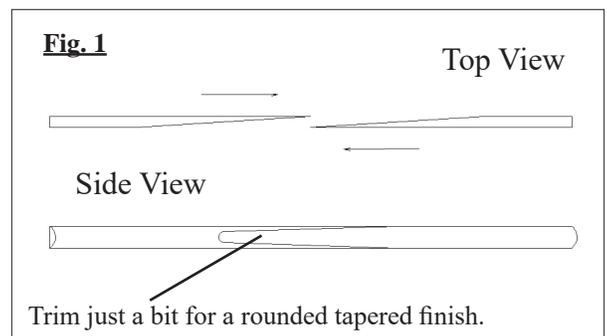
Note: The outside Half Round rim is "worked" with its flat side inward. The inside Flat Oval rim is "worked" with its rounded side inward.

In order to form a smooth joint where the rims overlap you need to carve some of the thickness from both ends of each rim.

To determine exactly where to carve, attach the outside rim around the top of your basket (with clothespins)—flat side of rim touching the basket. Mark the rim where it overlaps—marking the rounded side of one end of the rim and the flat side of the other end.

Remove the rim. Carve the rounded side of one end at an angle and the flat side of the other end at the same angle using a carving knife or hand plane forming a smooth overlapping joint as shown in Fig. 1.

Repeat this procedure with the inside rim. Trim just a bit at the end of each rim for a rounded tapered finish. See Fig. 1.



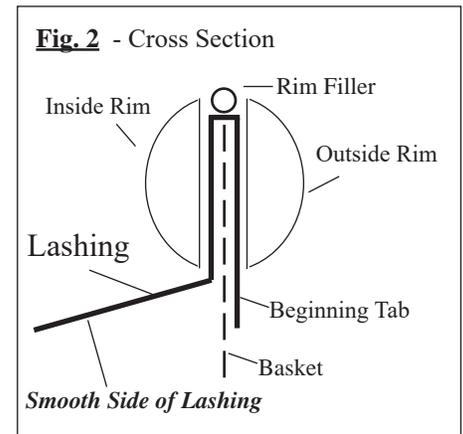
Positioning Rims after Carving

You'll be placing the carved rims onto your basket, positioning the rim overlaps just a few inches apart; I generally place the overlaps on one of the 'long' sides of the basket and into the ear notches. Beginning with the rim's flat side touching the basket, place the inside rim around the basket into the ear notches securing with a few clothespins. Position the outside rim around the basket; secure with clothespins. Sandwich the Seagrass rim filler between the inside and outside rims and *through* the ears. Attach rims and rim filler *to the top row of weaving* with cable ties or twist ties, allowing for the seagrass rim filler to overlap about 2".

Lashing

Single lash the rims with 1/4" Flat Reed creating a backstitch at each handle. To begin, look at the outside of the basket and locate a stake to the right of the rim overlaps. The *space** following this stake is where you'll start lashing.

Soak a long piece of 1/4" Flat (2.5 times the circumference of your basket) and note its smooth side. As illustrated in Fig. 2, secure one end of the 1/4" Flat (in the identified space*) under the inside rim, beneath the rim filler and under the outside rim, leaving a beginning 'tab' about 1" on the outside of the basket.



Working left to right from the outside of your basket, bring the 'free' end of your lashing over the rims (smooth side out) and insert it into the space between the following two stakes just below the rims. Pull one arm's-length of reed through to the inside of your basket. Now, anchor the lashing's end between the next two stakes.

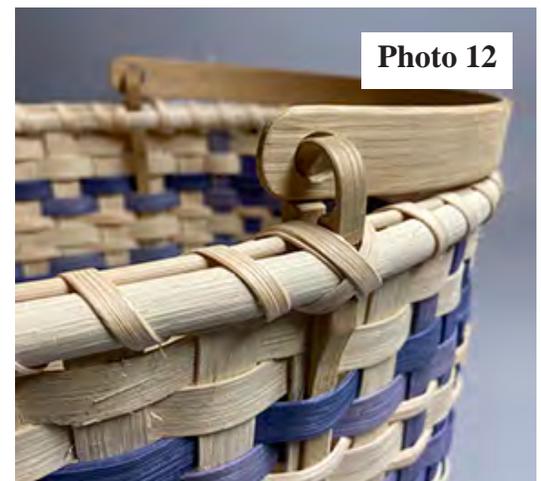
Tighten the first stitch (the large loop of reed) from left to right by pulling the lasher to the inside. Squeeze the rims and tighten the stitch.

Anchor the lashing's end between the next two stakes and tighten the large loop of reed by pulling the lasher to the inside.

Re-tighten the previous stitch before you tighten each new stitch. Repeat.

Re-wet the lashing as needed so it remains pliable as you work around the rim.

At each ear, lash diagonally across the outside rim and tighten that diagonal stitch. Then make a back stitch, lashing diagonally across the outside rim in the opposite direction. Pull these diagonal stitches tight. Continue lashing as before by duplicating the first diagonal stitch and moving forward to anchor the lashing's end between the next two stakes. See Photo 12.



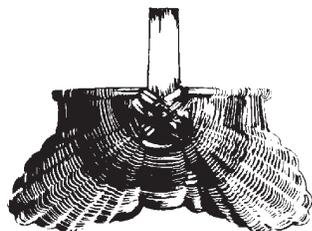
Note: The basket in Photo 12 uses #6 Round Reed for the rim filler instead of Seagrass.

When your lashing reaches the place it began, trim the beginning 'tab' of lashing then insert the final stitch into the space where you trimmed the 'tab'. Pull this stitch to the inside and tuck its end behind a couple of weavers on the inside of your basket, then fold the end upward, over the lower weaver, and behind another weaver or two above. Trim the end to hide behind a weaver. See Photo 13.

If your lashing is too short to reach completely around the rim or should your lashing break, start the new piece of lashing as shown in Fig. 2 and end the old piece as described above.

After lashing, shape the rims a bit while they are damp (or spray them to dampen then shape) if needed. You may also tie them to shape with a scrap of cord or 1/4" reed. When completely dry, remove the cord and they'll hold their shape. Trim away any "hairs" or fraying.

Enjoy using your beautiful basket!



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