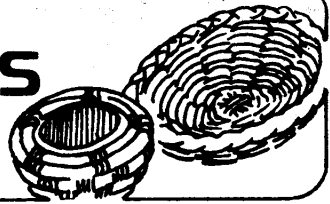


# OF BASKETS



by Cathy Ingebretsen

Basketry is the oldest form of fiber manipulation known to man. The reason? Containers were needed to transport food from where it was picked, dug or killed to where it was to be eaten. The development of primitive fiber manipulation (sewn and woven baskets . . . woven shelters . . . woven clothing . . . spun fibers, plaiting, braiding, netting, knotting, knitting, crocheting, sewing, . . .) was brought about by **FUNCTIONAL NEED**.

This functional need is the most important difference that I see between traditional and contemporary weavers. We no longer functionally need to make containers. We can buy plastic bags, plastic buckets, plastic baskets. We no longer functionally need to make our own clothing or shelter, or fish nets or linens.

Because we are "freed" from the necessity of making a basket that has to conform to a certain usage, we have the option to make entirely non-functional baskets or sculpture. We can play; we can experiment; we can close off the top, or open the bottom. We can meander with the basket and combine new materials. We have the freedom and time to fail as well as succeed. We are limited only by ourselves and can be as creative as we dare. We can weave just to weave—and not to make. Yet we still have the old options of functional need to work within, too.

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Whatever direction you choose to pursue, I hope you'll always be aware of the aesthetic aspects of weaving, of the meaning, the texture, the design, . . . the beauty.

This will be the last of this basketry series column. Please contact Karen Searle or myself if you have any opinion on what should fill this space next year. A couple options that we've discussed are:

1. "Of baskets" — dealing with materials and technical information. (i.e., natural materials—where to get them and how to work with them; contemporary materials—suggestions and where and how and why; books—which ones deal with specific information you might want to know.
2. A column "on Yarns" — dealing with specific yarns; characteristics, sizing, setts, cost, usage, accessibility.

Your comments and suggestions would be gratefully appreciated. You can write to either of us in care of the Guild. Thanks.

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