

Raffia Baskets

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Requirements:

Genuine Raffia
3 x .50mm florist wire 30cm long (12")
or cake wire
Acrylic paint, white, burnt umber &
yellow ochre
Aleene's Tacky Glue
Darning needle with large eye
Walnut Stain if desired



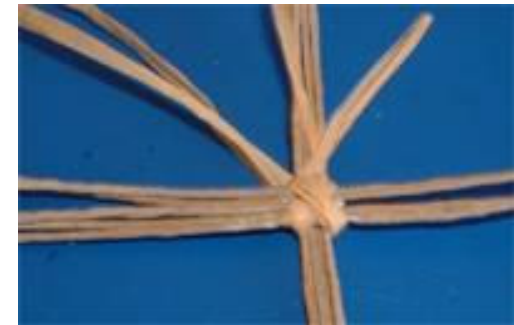
Genuine Raffia is uneven and often the strands are too thick to use as they are, so you must split the strand down to a better thickness - about 3mm (1/8") works best. You will need to put a twist on it as you work to keep it looking like twine.



Bind the fine florists wire with florists tape - white for preference (or use paper covered cake wire), winding diagonally down the wire. Paint with a mix of burnt umber, yellow ochre & white.



Cut each wire in 3 even pieces - you now have 9 lengths. They will lie 4 horizontally, 4 vertically and the odd one in the middle of the top 4 (on the left). You now have 17 spokes which are adequate for a small round basket. For a larger basket, add more wires. **You must always have an odd number.**



Sandwich the tail of raffia between the two layers of wires. Now wind across twice from corner to corner, pass under one side of the bottom 4 and cross twice from corner to corner again.



Open the stems out spider-like until they are evenly spaced. You may have to pinch the "corner" ones together to get them to lie correctly. and pass clockwise (in a square) under the bottom layer, up over the top layer, under the opposite side bottom layer, and over the top layer. Do this twice.



Once it is reasonably even, start to wind around the centre, under and over, don't pull too tightly... take the strand forward and back each time - don't try to do more than one spoke at a time or the strand will not sit up snugly against the previous row.

Use your finger nail to adjust the shape, pushing gently in towards the centre to keep it in a smooth round shape.



Keep checking that the spokes are even and that you haven't gone over two by mistake as you weave or you will have to go back.

When it is about 3cm ($\pm 1/4$ ") across you are ready to start to form the sides of the basket.



Place your fingernail on the point where the bend is to form - fold up spoke with other hand, this will give a neat corner. On a larger size, use a jar or bottle of some sort as a former. Don't worry about the spacing until you have got up onto the sides.



Weaving in a new strand.

Feed in new strands by splitting the strand and leaving half of it overlapping for some distance - when you have about 3 more rows done, the tails can be trimmed off close.



This is now ready to join in another new strand. Build the sides up to desired height - a fruit basket would be shallow, a laundry basket would be deeper. Gently push down the raffia weaving so that it has an even edge.

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Place a bead of Aleene's tacky glue on the last spoke and pin down the tail end. This will be trimmed back when dry.
Place a tiny bead of glue to make contact with the spoke and the raffia on each side of all of the spokes. Leave to dry.
(You can also use gel superglue applied very neatly.)



Trim back the spokes level with the edge of the basket using a pair of side-cutters.
To get the basket to sit flat, upturn it over the mouth of a pill bottle or suchlike, place a piece of fabric or tissue on top and tap gently with a hammer - this will push the lumpy section into the basket, out of the way and the basket should now stand evenly.



If you want a handle, leave the long wire and one opposite uncut - it will be fractionally off centre but will be hardly noticeable. Cut an extra length of 10cm of painted wire. Bend and tuck the ends in beside the spoke on each side. Wind a piece of thin fuse wire around the two handle sections to keep them together.



Cut a length of thicker raffia about 50cms long. Tie a knot in the end. Now split the strand into 3 and plait enough to go around one half of the basket. Glue down just short of the handles and pin in place until dry.
Put glue on the underside of the end with the knot - the knot will be cut off later but it mustn't fray out.



Pass one strand of the plait inside the basket and continue plaiting round to the other handle. Cut off the knot and glue up on to the handle. When dry, glue and pin the rest of the plait onto the other edge, finishing up against the second side of the handle.
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Wind 2 strands of the plait thinly and tightly around handle - pull through alongside handle spoke with a darning needle. Neatly wind third strand in opposite direction around handle and thread tail through other side of spoke. Trim off.
Paint with walnut stain diluted with thinners if desired.