

Allotment Forestry

WIGWAM PLANT SUPPORTS

These popular plant supports are easy to make from materials found in and around the garden with different sizes suited to different climbers. Building your wigwam on site will make it strong, but if you need it for a different spot or for a friend it will have to be gently pulled out of the ground.

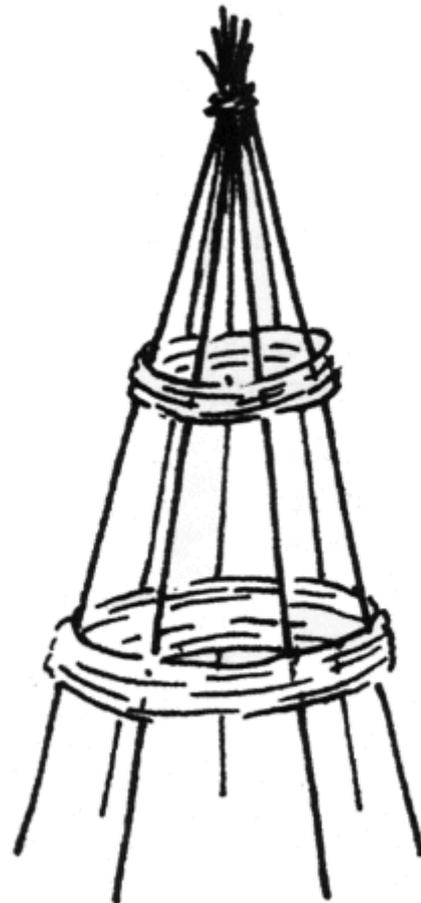
Only a pair of secateurs and a ball of strong natural fibre string are needed. The method of weaving the twigs used in this factsheet is known a 'pairing', because it uses two weavers at a time, giving a simple, strong weave.

Stakes – 12 equal length strong, straight sticks of at least 1.5 cm thickness. Length needs to be longer than the height of the wigwam required.

Weavers – At least 20 long, thin bendy twigs. These should be fresh cut.

Most woody plant species can be used so long as it is sufficiently straight, Hazel and willow are the common species used. Make sure the willow has been dried for some time or you may find it will set root and grow!

Any species that can be wrapped around your wrist and doesn't snap is okay to use eg willow, hazel, dogwood, clematis (Old Man's Beard), honeysuckle, birch, elm and bramble – but remove the thorns.



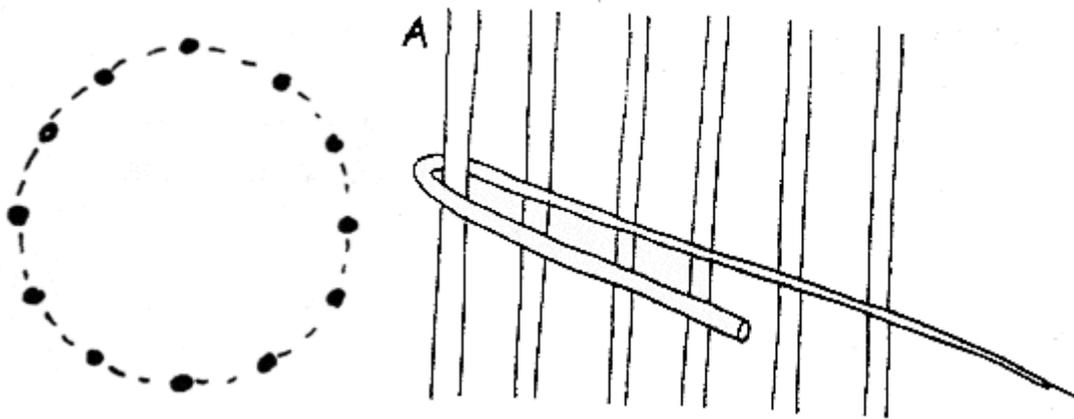
How to begin

Using the secateurs point the thick end of the stakes so they can be pushed into the ground easier.

Mark a circle on the ground the same size as the base of the wigwam required. Dinner-plate size is fine for a short wigwam, car tyre size is better for a very tall one.

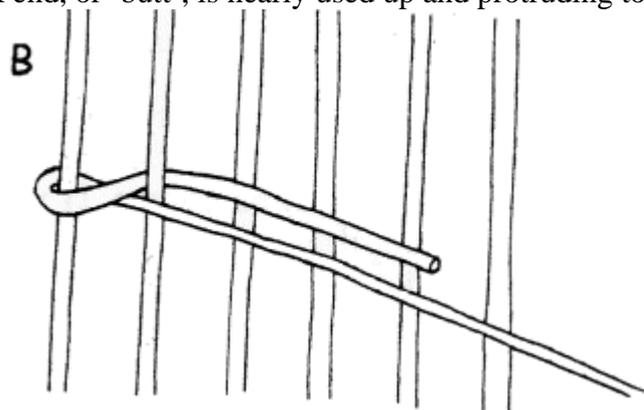
Evenly space the stakes around the circle and push the pointed thick ends into the soil to at least 15cm.

Tie the tops of the stakes together with the string, winding it round several times, pulling tight and securing it with a knot. Ensure the tie is directly above the centre of your circle.



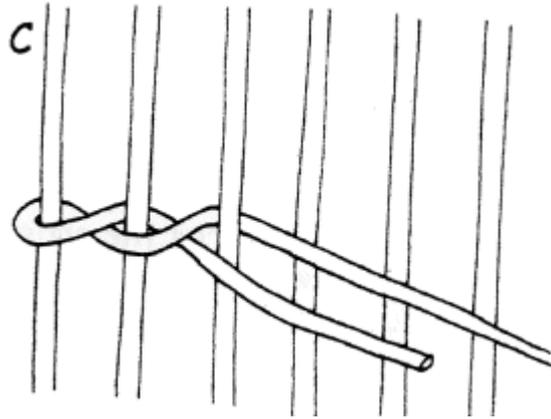
Weaving the lower band

Near the ground bend a weaver around a stake and weave it as shown in drawings A–C. Continue steps B and C until the thick end, or ‘butt’, is nearly used up and protruding to the

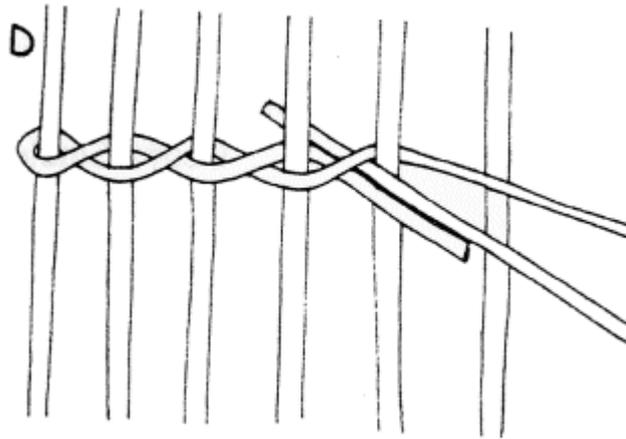


front or outside of the wigwam.

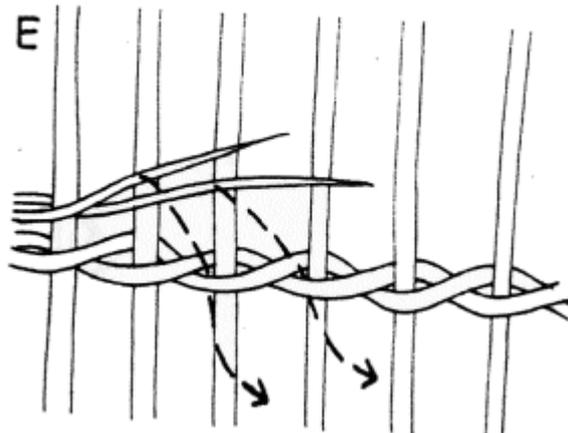
Introduce a new weaver, butt first, as shown in drawing D and continue weaving as steps B and C. You will notice this results in the two weavers going over and under each other at the same time as they go around the stakes



As the weavers begin to run out replace them both by laying a new weaver, with the thin end or tip to the left, on each one and continuing to weave with the two pairs. Always replace weavers that run out by laying the new weavers butt to butt or tip to tip as appropriate.



As the next weavers run out to their butt ends introduce new weavers as shown in drawing D. Continue weaving, introducing new weavers as described in C and D above, till you are happy with the depth and making sure the last weavers will end on their tips. To finish off, thread the tips through the previous row of weaving a few times to secure.



The next band

You will need to make at least one more band of weaving to complete your wigwam. Decide at what height it needs to start, then begin again in exactly the same way as before. If your weaving slips downwards at the start, use a length of tape or a clothes peg to hold it temporarily in position. Work this band to the depth you want and finish as before.

Undo the string at the top and re-arrange the tops of the stakes if they look muddled up. Then re-tie it really tightly, making several turns around, finishing with a secure knot. Trim the tops of the stakes level well above the tie then trim the ends of weavers that stick out. Pegs made from forked twigs, as shown here, can be used to hold down the wigwam.



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