

Butter-Colored Beauties:

KNIFE SHEATH

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A knife sheath is just as important as the tool it protects. Birch bark makes a sturdy and beautiful protective layer for any size or style of knife. These butter-colored beauties are a common sight on North House instructors' belts.



Materials

- ◆ 5 or 6 strips of birch bark, 1" wide x 12" long
- ◆ Scissors
- ◆ Several clothespins
- ◆ Two thin pieces of wood
- ◆ Carving knife







1. Start by folding four strips of the 1"-wide x 12"-long birch bark; fold each in half (A). Tuck two together at this folded seam. Fold in the third and fourth strips, alternating with the beginning strip to make a diamond over-and-under pattern (B). This diamond is called the "gate."
2. Weaving from the gate, pull back and fold under the tail strip at a diagonal, then over and under (C). Do the same on the back side.
3. Work your way up the sheath, continually following the gate and using the outside strips.
4. After weaving to the top of the sheath, cross the strips, bevel the ends with scissors, and clip with clothespins (D). Next, weave back down the sheath to create a "double woven knife basket." The first step in back-weaving is to create pairs of strips—in this sheath that started with four strips, there will be four pairs of strips. Secure each pair with a clothespin (E).
5. Finish with the picket fence top. In each pair that has been created, the strip that is under its partner is folded down over the partner to lie over itself when the fold is complete. The other member of the pair is also folded over and lies over itself when the fold is complete (F).

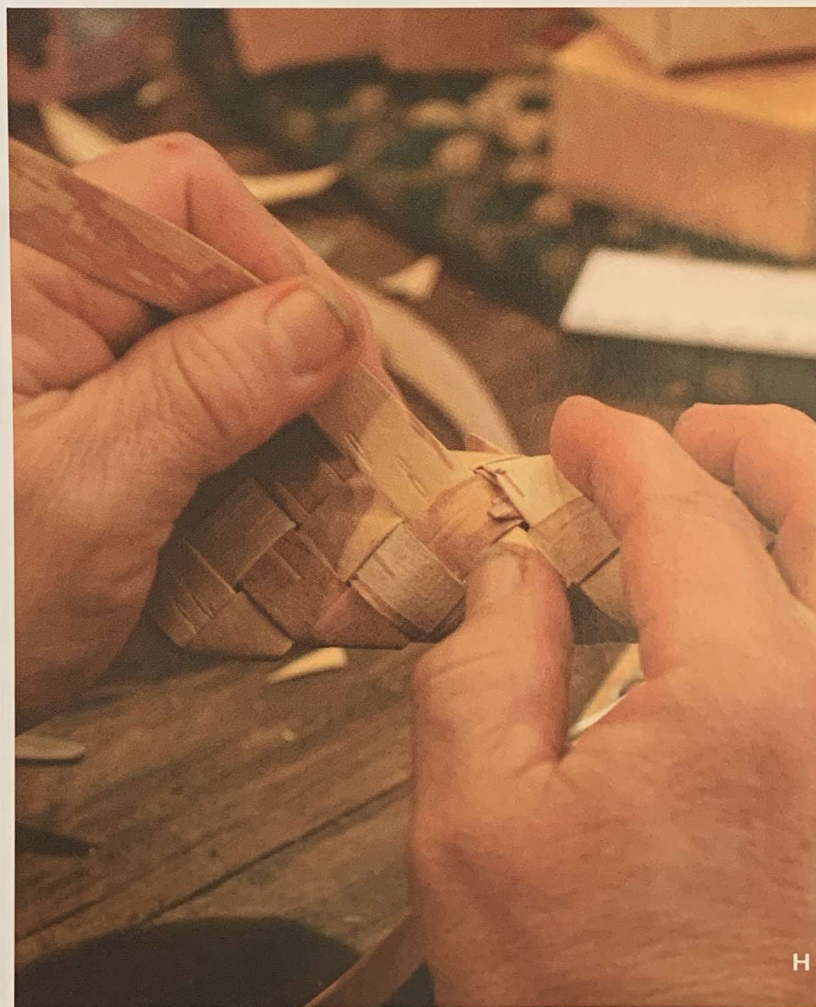


6. Once you have worked your way around the entire circle, weave the ends down farther in the sheath. Trim off any excess strip ends (G).

7. Weave in an extra strip over the top of any strip that has ended in your sheath partway, making sure to weave in over at least two diamonds (H). Splicing adds strength and continuity of color. Trim again after splicing.

8. When the sheath is completed, the next step is to make a protective wooden blade guard that slips inside the sheath. To make this guard, use two thin pieces of wood. Trace the blade shape on one of the pieces of wood and carve the wood out so that the blade fits and is level with the surface of the wood. The second piece of wood is fit over the piece that has been carved out. Wrap the two pieces of wood together and insert into the sheath. It may take several "fittings" to have the blade guard positioned just right—but with trial and error it should work.

One final note: This basic method of weaving can be used to make larger sheaths or wall baskets by increasing the number or width of the strips used in making the basket. This method can even be used to create a necktie!



E

F

G

H