

GROW *and weave* WILLOW!



Advice on growing willow from Cathie at The Gardening School, Squires at Secretts, Milford. Some fun weaving inspired by Judith Needham.

Growing willow

Those of you who attended previous willow and pruning workshops will already know how easy it is to propagate and grow your own willow. It should also be pointed out that a little insignificant hardwood willow cutting can grow into an enormous plant in only a few years. It loves a damp area and can indeed help with said problems. If pruned hard every year willow will reward you with coloured stems to create works of art, plant supports, new cuttings and of course pea and bean sticks. If you are using them as pea sticks and don't want them to grow tape over the ends with strong tape!

Willow weaving

Willow can be woven during the winter as a living structure and we have several in the gardening school. A more popular pastime is weaving from prepared willow, making baskets and children's play tents as well as animals, birds and plant supports to adorn your garden or conservatory. It is a rewarding hobby and popular among gardeners, craftspeople and anyone wanting to make something wonderful to keep or give as a gift.

Basket-making with Judith Needham

Local basket-maker Judith Needham is best known for her fairytale playhouses and dens made from woven willow. Typically 150cm in diameter and 180cm tall, they are substantial structures which can be used by children for imaginative play or by adults and teenagers for reading and relaxing. The natural colours and woven texture look perfect in a garden but can also be used indoors as secluded hideaways from busy family life. Many are bought by schools and nurseries but families from as far afield as Atlanta in the USA buy them too! Judith also teaches basket-making and, with the rise in

interest in all forms of craft, her classes are very popular. On Thursday May 14th Judith has been invited to teach at Cathie's Gardening School, within Squire's Garden Centre at Secretts in Milford, Surrey. In a one-day class you won't have time to make a playhouse (!), but you will go home with a beautiful trug-shaped basket that you have made yourself. Perfect for harvesting your homegrown veg or using as a fruit bowl, this shallow basket with a handle is made using the 'frame' technique which is a perfect introduction for newcomers to this ancient craft. "The great thing about this basket", says Judith, "is that the hardest bits (such as they are) come at the beginning. Once you've got to a certain stage, you are just weaving to and fro, filling in the framework. This makes for a very relaxing atmosphere with time to chat while we work. Making a basket whilst sitting in Cathie's beautiful garden in May will be a wonderful way to spend a day."

Courses for May

'Learn to Garden' and the RHS module on soils, nutrition and the root environment has already begun but you can still join in! Workshops include wild food foraging, willow weaving a trug basket and beekeeping for beginners.

All courses are run from Cathie's Gardening School based in Squire's Garden Centre at Secretts, Milford. Please ask for a registration form and further details from Cathie.

Cathie can come and teach you in your own garden too and this is a wonderful gift for a birthday, wedding, anniversary or just as a treat for you!

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