

Deb Cantrill's work

These beautiful woven basketry items have been designed and handcrafted by Deb Cantrill of South Australia. You can visit her blog, Weaving Magic Naturally, at <http://weavingmagicnaturally.blogspot.com/>

Deb writes:

Earth, Water, Air, Fire

Weaving objects out of natural materials is a natural accompaniment to gardening, growing your own food and enjoying the natural world. What is better than gathering your own home grown vegetables in a basket you made from plants from your garden or neighbourhood? A craft that dates back to the beginning of civilization, born out of need and yet each style unique to each culture.

The materials, born out of nature are gathered; roots (earth) leaves (water), flowers (air) and fruits (fire) are gathered at their peak and stored ready to create objects that are both practical and beautiful. Each material has its own properties which leads it s use in various creative directions.

There are many techniques to explore and develop from a simple container to fences or sculptures and everything in between.

Woven Coffee Table

After seeing examples of tension trays brought back from the gathering in Tasmania I played around a bit with willow. The longest task was collecting the material despite the fact that I have plenty to choose from around the willow house. I made a few of various sizes taking advantage of all the lengths of willow. These have dried a nice black colour. Then I got carried away and went large and made a coffee table. (1100 x 600 x 500 high)



I then collected some plum suckers and found them better than the willow and they display a range of colours from brown through to red. After cutting they were sorted into sizes and bundled each bundled size made a couple of different sized trays .e.g. 100x 150 ,300x 150.

This is extremely beneficial for teaching as students all have individual size preferences and it also takes maximum advantage of collected materials. I plan to use bush sticks next to see what happens.

The next thought was to add a bit of individualization so I wove some iris along the edges – left a handle and wrapped it and it became a serving tray. Plum tension tray with handle 450 x 250 + handle 100



At our last Hills Basket Cases meeting several members made tension trays and by the end of the day they had all decided weaving along the edge was the way to go.

Full Moon Iris Platter



Frame: pear prunings.

Stakes: willow

Weavers: iris, iris 2ply.

32 x 45 x 31 cm high.

August 2010

Egg Basket



Frame and stakes– willow

Weavers– iris, 2ply iris/sari silk, leather, 2ply iris .

33 x 29 x 40 cm high

August 2010



A hardy group of Basketry SA braved the winter chill to venture to the Adelaide Hills to collect some pieces of French basket willow from [Nirvana's willow house](#). With secateurs at hand they collected long straight branches, some coiled into buckets, some bundled up for frames or fences and some to take home to grow.

Dragonfly

Frame and stakes: willow.

Weavers: Twined Iris

Wings: knotless netting poa 2 ply

Eyes: stitched 2 ply chasmanthe. Legs:
Fruit tree prunings.

112 x 145 cm

Designed to hang on the wall.



At Nirvana Farm many springs form the headwaters of Scott Creek. There is a large array of wetland plants and ponds forming an ideal habitat for dragonflies. Dragonflies need fresh water to hatch their eggs and for the developing nymphs. The nymphs spend their lives in the water, forming an important part of the fresh water food chain before emerging as adult dragonflies to dance in the air and consume an array of other insects aiding in the overall balance of our farm.

Gnome Summer House



Frame: plum prunings.

Stakes: plum ,willow

Weavers: twined spear lily, pale rush, NZ flax, Watsonia, bulrush, leather, banana, palm stems, 2ply- spear lily, iris, chasmanthe, Watsonia, seagrass.

Height :120cm Width: 82 cm circumference: 250 cm

Gardens can house many secret lives if we take the time to look.

Gnomes are the elemental being connected with all that is below in the earth, and the fertility of the soil. Since the soil is more active and alive in winter, I like to think that in summer they emerge from deep within the earth to frolic in the summer sunshine, revitalizing themselves like the sun trapped in quartz crystals. If you venture to the bottom of my garden you may find their summer house amongst the grasses and faded flowers along with a few other seasonal visitors.

The **Gnome Summer House** started out as an interesting piece of plum pruning, few additional willow stakes were added. The shape developed with the twining. I added in materials to see how they worked as I had not used

many of them before. I was just having fun with the shape. I added a few holes and visitors thought they were windows so I hung a few gnomes out the windows so it developed into a house, and since gnomes live at the bottom of my garden it became their summer house. There is much life in the garden so when it was suggested at basketry we make animals I decided to make a few insects that you will find in the garden.

When collecting prunings, each offers a unique shape and basketry opportunity. It is fun to shape a branch and reveal a new shape that develops when weaving. The **Autumn Harvest Platter** and **Out on the Bay** are examples of this.



Autumn Harvest Platter

Frame: Pear prunings, Stakes: willow.

Weavers: Twined Watsonia and iris. Snail shell.

57 x 43 x 32 cm.

The colours of autumn in the Adelaide Hills always inspire. Autumn Harvest Platter suggests a leaf form and the colours in this platter reflect our chestnut harvest, the dark brown of the chestnuts while the surrounding burrs are lighter along with the drier outer landscape of early autumn. The snail signifies my belief in the Slow Food Movement- the pleasure of food with the responsibility of how it is grown: GOOD- food should taste great. CLEAN: Food should be grown in an environmental responsible way. FAIR-The farmers and farm workers should be paid a fair price for their efforts.



Out on the Bay

Frame: pear prunings.

Stakes: willow.

Weavers: iris and Watsonia.

34 x 15 x 32 cm high

This piece is a favourite because it demonstrates a simple shape created out of one pruned off branch of the pear tree.