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Woven Branch Art

Create a work of art with branches, twigs and other pieces of cut plant material

Sometimes it's interesting to do an activity with little to no guidance and just see what happens! In this activity, we'll use a diversity of plants and our imaginations, in groups or individually, to create a work of art. This can be an ideal activity for winter, when branches can be cut with no leaves on them.



Objectives

- Recycle pruned plant materials and a minimum of other materials into a work of art.
- Stretch your understanding of “art”
- Manipulate materials into various forms.
- Learn to properly use pruning shears.
- Use your imagination!

Materials needed

- A diversity of any cut plant materials that do not cause skin sensitivity, such as:
 - Ornamental grasses
 - Twigs from shrubs and trees
 - Grapevines
 - Spent blossoms, such as sedum, yarrow, statice
- Pruning shears
- Twine
- Woven Branch powerpoint for inspiration

Time required

An hour to several hours, depending on the project scope.

Background/Intro

Creating art out of weaving branches involves intertwining the young, flexible branches and stems of woody plants like shrubs and trees. The techniques used are similar those of basket making. Unlike topiary where the main focus is leaves, in woven branch creations the focus is on the stems of plants.

Some material considerations:

- Stiffness/flexibility
- Rough/smooth
- Color/visual texture



Three students hold up a fanciful, 2-dimensional wall hanging they produced in a couple of hours

Activity, step by step

This project is a terrific way to stretch our understanding of “art,” as functional or decorative, with a diversity of plant materials. Begin by gathering as much plant material as you possibly can - the more diverse, and the larger material, the more you can create.

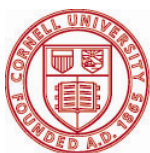
First, demonstrate the proper way to use pruning shears. Encourage young people to work in teams to look over the material, and plan what they may want to make. Encourage them to be inspired by what they see – what kinds of things could be made with the materials at hand?

Remember the “haircut rule” - you cannot make a stem longer after it’s been cut, so err on the side of fewer initial cuts.

At first, they may look for guidance. You can provide it, or you can simply encourage them to use their imagination to come up with “something.” Be prepared for a period of time in which there is a bit of tension, as the young people discuss what they could do.

Going Further

Plan a project on a larger scale as a public work.



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**Garden-Based
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Resources for educators, volunteers, and parents working with children and youth.



Cornell Garden-Based Learning Program website: www.hort.cornell.edu/gbl