

## **BRAIDED CORNHUSK HOT PADS, MATS, AND BASKETS**

### **MATERIALS:**

Cornhusks	bowl of water	heavy-duty thread
Needle	small bath towel	thumbtacks
Scissors	small board	

Save a quantity of green husks from summer dinners of corn on the cob. String the green husks on a long length of strong thread with a needle. Hang the husks to dry for a week or more in an airy, shaded place until they become bleached and dry to the touch.

Before braiding, soak the husks in a bowl of water. Keep the husks damp while you work. A small bath towel placed beneath the husks will absorb extra water and keep you dry.

Tear the husks into long, narrow strips about 3/4 to 1 inch wide. Take three strips of different lengths and tie them together in a knot or bind them together with heavy-duty thread. Tack the knotted end to a board and braid the husks. Add new strips as each end shortens by folding each leaf lengthwise as you braid and pushing a small section of the leaf being added into the fold of the one that is almost used up. You can make yard-long plaits, but be sure to add the new strips at different places so that the braid will not pull apart.

Now you have lengths of braiding or plaiting from which you can make hot pads and mats by laying them side by side and sewing the coils together, or baskets by setting the braids on edge. Plaiting 1 inch wide and about 5 feet long will make a round mat 8 inches in diameter. You will need 9 feet of 1/2 inch wide plaiting to make the same size mat.

To make a round mat, coil a braid in a tight spiral about a central point. Use thumbtacks to fasten the spiral to the board in several places to hold the shape and sew the coiled rows together with a needle and heavy-duty thread. If you want to make an oval-shaped mat, lay the innermost braid in a straight line as long as your finger, then bend it back sharply in the opposite direction beyond the braid's beginning point and continue. Tack the spiral to the board to hold the shape and sew in place.

To sew the braided coils together securely, begin at the center of the spiral mat and sew two rounds of braid together with zigzag stitches catching the outside of each braided coil. Then sew the second braided coil to the third. Continue until you sew every plaited coil to the one inside it. Work from the center to the outside edge of the mat.

Give the mats a neat finish by cutting a few strips out of the end of the braid to make it gradually thinner. You then have a flat tapered end to sew.

To make a basket, coil and sew a flat spiral mat the size you want to make the bottom. When the base of the basket is large enough, set the next round of plaiting *upright* (on edge) instead of flat. Sew the upright spiral to the base with zigzag stitches. Build up the basket's sides with additional spirals. Finish off by tapering the end of the braid.

*Braided Cornhusk Mats*

