



CASA  'LA PAZ'
 SAGE ADVICE...
NATIVES FOR BASKETRY

Indigenous tribes throughout California use many kinds of native plants in their rich tradition of basket-making. Their baskets range from utilitarian styles for everyday use to finely crafted works of art intended for presentation or ceremonial use.

Some baskets have 240 “stitches” per inch and tightly coiled types can actually hold water. Some utilitarian (twined) baskets can be made in less than an hour; others (coiled) can take months for the maker to gather and prepare the materials and weave the basket.

Plant parts used include stems, roots, rhizomes and leaves. Several methods are used to grow plant parts with optimal basketry characteristics. Burning and coppicing (cutting back to the crown) produce stems with few branches, long internodes, distinctive bark, and uniform diameter. Soil cultivation promotes exceptionally long roots and rhizomes. Post-collection treatment ranges from drying and splitting, to natural bleaching and dyeing.

California’s tradition of fine native baskets continues into the present. The art of basket-making is being passed on to the younger generations just as it has been for centuries. At Tree of Life, we are privileged to be part of the tradition as we grow many species for basket weavers and participate in local events focused on this beautiful art form.

Plants	Common Name	Parts Used
Agave	Century Plant	leaves
Asclepias	Milkweed	stems
Baccharis	Coyote Bush	stems
Carex	Sedge	leaves, stems
Cercis	Redbud	stems
Juncus	Rush	roots, stems
Muhlenbergia	Deer Grass	flower stems
Rhus	Sumac	roots, stems
Salix	Willow	roots, stems
Scirpus	Tule	roots, stems
Typha	Cattail	leaves, stems
Vitis	Grape	roots, sapwood
Yucca		leaves, roots

For more information visit these websites:

- California Indian Basketweavers Assn.: www.ciba.org
- Tree of Life Nursery: www.CaliforniaNativePlants.com



Typical Mission-style basket by weaver Abe Sanchez. This basket was “commissioned” by TOLN; Abe designed it with our California Fan Palm logo. He included a bat species that often roosts in the palm.

Additional reading:

- These titles cover a wide range of basketry topics and can be found in Casa la Paz, our unique store of plants and books.
- Survival Skills of Native California*, Campbell
- Native American Ethnobotany*, Moerman
- Early Uses of California Plants*, Balls
- Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream*, Sarris
- Temalpakh: Cahuilla Indian knowledge and usage of plants*, Bean and Saubel
- The Natural World of the California Indians*, Heizer and Elsasser
- The California Indian; A Source Book*, Heizer and Whipple
- The Gabrielino*, Miller
- Primitive Technology, a Book of Earth Skills*, Wescott
- Indian Basket Makers*, Dalrymple
- The Fine Art of California Indian Basketry*, Bibby
- Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, Farmer