

A Willow Magazine Rack

August 14, 1999

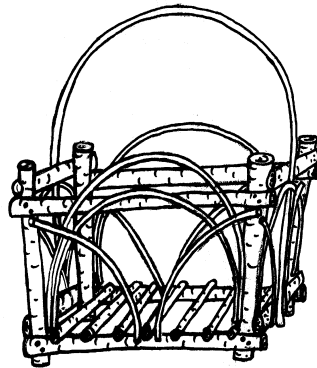
Price \$5.00

From the Willow Patch

When starting a new project you'll need to find some materials. Willow and Tag Alder are primarily found in swamps, but you might also locate these trees in ditches along highways and side roads.

Willow comes in many varieties. Basically there are trees (about 400 species) and only 1 species of shoots (Sandbar Willow). The shoots grow in a clump and can be anywhere from 3 to 15 feet in height. They have narrow, pointed leaves with fairly

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In addition to the items listed in the material list, you will also need some orange (not white) shellac and Min Wax Natural Antique Oil. The Orange shellac is used to seal the ends of the Willow or any place along the wood where the bark has been broken. As the wood seasons it is much less susceptible to the stresses associated with the drying process.

The use of Willow is not essential for this project. Any type of wood can be used, from White Birch to Maple. We try to build with Willow or Tag Alder simply because it is virtually inexhaustible in supply, and harvesting it will only enhance the health and vitality of our marshlands.

Okay, let's get started. If you follow the proceeding steps and re-

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Material List:

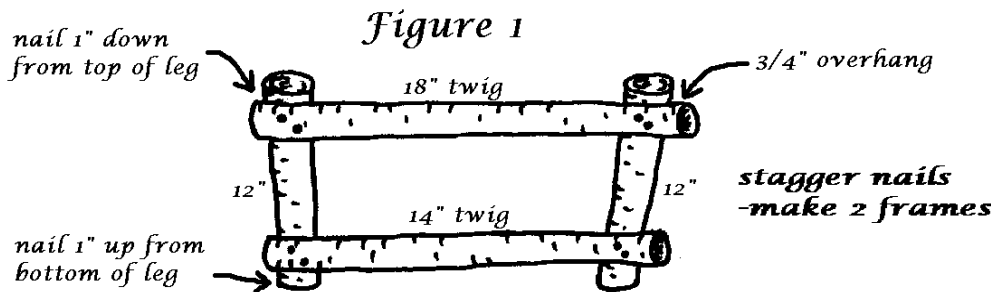
4 pieces	(legs)	1" (diam.) x 12" (long)
2 pieces	(side rails)	3/4" (diam.) x 18" (long)
2 pieces	(side rails)	3/4" (diam.) x 14" (long)
2 pieces	(end rails)	3/4" (diam.) x 9" (long)
2 pieces	(end rails)	3/4" (diam.) x 7" (long)
8 pieces	(base)	5/8" (diam.) x 7" (long)
12 young Willow shoots approx,		3/8" (diam.) x 48" (long)
Paneling nails (brown)		2 boxes 1" and 2 boxes 1 5/8"
Shoe Tacks or Brads		from 1/2" to 1"
Tools required		pair of lops, garden snips, tape measure, hammer, file or a hacksaw, surform or utility knife

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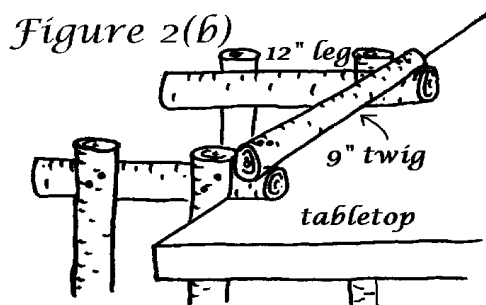
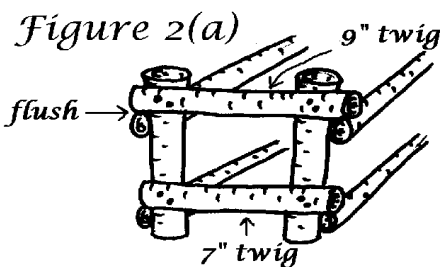
fer to the appropriate illustrations, hopefully you'll emerge from this experience with a sturdy twig magazine rack that will last you a lifetime. Start with the 4 legs and 4 side rails.

Step 1. Assemble the simple frame as shown in figure 1. This will be one of the sides of the magazine rack. The taper is easily maintained by insuring the 3/4" overhang (as shown) for all four corners. Use 1 5/8" panelling nails and be sure that each pair of nails is offset so that the ends of the twigs are less likely to split. Of course, you'll build two of these frames - one for each side. Also keep in mind that the diameters stated in the material list are only approximate. Use the four 12", two



18", and two 14" twigs.

Step 2. Get the two 9" and the two 7" twigs and attach them to the two side frames. Use the same nails as in Step 1. At this point it is useful to have support under the pieces that you are nailing together, We find it easiest to make use of the edge of your work table - just "hook" the part that you're nailing together on the tables' top edge. Refer to Figure 2(b).



By now it should be starting to look like a magazine rack !

Remember that these four end rails will be positioned on top of the longer side rails.

Step 3. The next stage consists of nailing on the twigs for the floor or

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smooth greenish-grey coloured bark.

And of course, we can't forget the pussy willows.

Pussy willows are not an individual species, but rather, most Willows produce "pussy willows" early in the Spring. This is a sure fire way of identifying patches of Willow and usually, if you find Willow, then Tag Alders are close by.

The other easily recognizable characteristic of Willows are its' leaves. On the Sandbar Willow (the shoots), the leaves are long and come to a sharp point. This is also true of some

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Willow Leaf



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species of the trees.

Tag Alder, also known as Speckled Alder, is a member of the Birch family. But unlike its' cousins Yellow or White Birch, is little more than a shrub. I have very rarely seen a Tag Alder that was more than 6" or 8" in diameter and not lying on the ground rotting.

The roots of the Tag Alder have nodules on them that house nitrifying bacteria which take nitrogen from the air. This allows these trees to grow on bare soils that are often short of nitrates.

Tag Alder trees will grow in clumps, and since the young saplings are just small trees, they will not give as "smooth" an appearance as Willow shoots.

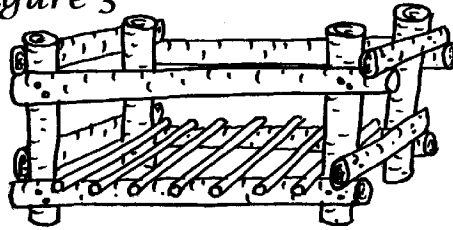
To find some Tag Alders simply take a drive in the country, and look for it in deep ditches

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base. These are the eight 7" long twigs. Before actually nailing these in place, arrange them on the two longer bottom side pieces and allow for an equal space between each twig. The easiest way to do this is by placing the first twig in the centre, and then another twig in the centre

Figure 3



of each of the remaining halves. Continue to split halves until there is equal (by eye) spacing. When you know that they are going to work, then go ahead and nail them - using appropriately sized nails.

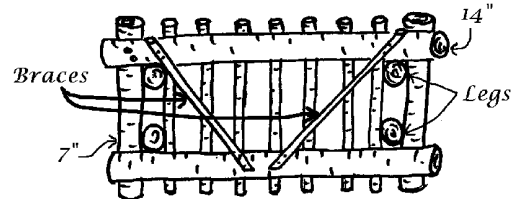
This is a difficult nailing process, but don't give up! Sometimes a pair of pliers (channel locks) can be used to "squeeze" the nail into the wood, but you have to be careful not to rip the bark.

Step 4. Attach the braces as shown in Figure 4. These are attached on the bottom of the magazine rack. These two pieces can be cut from scrap left over from cutting your material list. Be sure that the bottom is square to the eye before you nail the braces.

Well, that finishes the frame! If there are any nails with ends coming through the wood, now is a good time to remove them with the hacksaw and file. You could also make sure that any breaks in the bark and all the cut ends are sealed with Orange Shellac.

Step 5. Now the fun begins! You will use the dozen or so young shoots for decorating. **Remember to choose your nails carefully so that you minimize the amount of hacksawing needed to remove sharp nail points.** Pick a side to begin on, choose a suitably long shoot, and then pre-bend the shoot to the approximate shape it will take when fastened. Bend the shoot gently and smoothly and try to avoid "crinks" - especially around knots. Next fasten one end to the lower left side with a nail. Don't drive the nail home in case you decide to change something. Next fasten the shoot to the frame on the lower right side, being sure that the centre projects slightly above the top of the legs. Refer to figure 5(a). You should also keep in mind the importance of

Figure 4 (bottom view)



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Figure 5(a)

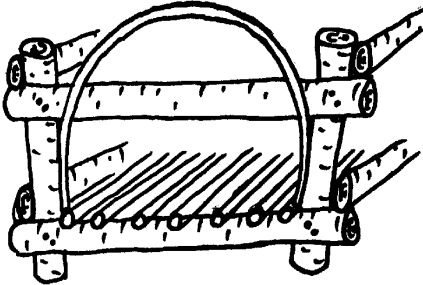
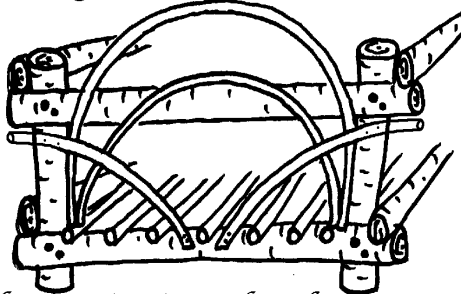


Figure 5(b)



Place twigs in order shown

symmetry - in short, place the shoot so that adjacent spaces and lines are evenly distributed. When you have it the way you want it, then finish nailing and trim off the ends.

Other shoots are applied in a similar manner. Figure 5(b) shows a completed side. Once you've become more familiar with working with



Tip: These shoots are not only decorative but will also perform an important function as braces. Make sure that the two legs stay symmetrical by eye as you apply the shoots. Each leg should splay out at the top equally.

Wil-
low, then I'm sure that you'll want to experiment with different decorating designs.

Step 6. Once both sides have been decorated and before you do the two ends, then it's time to put on the handle. Choose a sturdy shoot (approximately 49" by 1/2" diameter) and tack it on the two end rails in the centre of one end, as shown in figure 6 (a). Then you simply bend it over and tack it down the centre of the other end. If you're satisfied with it, then finish nailing. After it is nailed in place then you can ad-

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Figure 6(a)

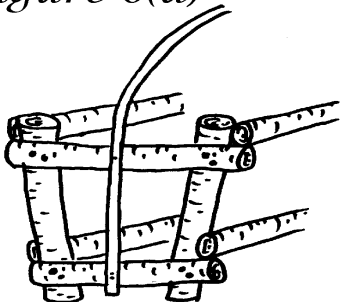
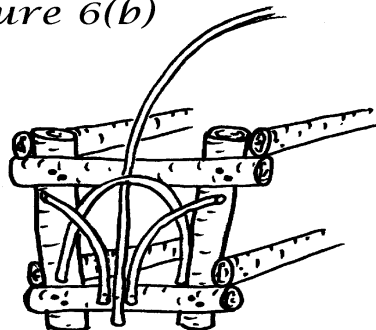


Figure 6(b)



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along the roadside or abandoned rail tracks. Quite often these old railway tracks are converted to snowmobile or cross country ski trails.

Tag Alders generally have greener bark than Willow (although in some locations the bark will look coppery), and there will be a distinctive pattern of short horizontal lines around the trunk of the trees. They will also have clusters of brown cones at the top of the trees. These cones are a good identifier because they harden after the seed has been dispersed, and will remain attached even through the winter.

Safety Tip: Always wear eye protection when picking in swamps - the footing is tricky and there are a lot of tangled branches to negotiate!

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Remember that the wood you use doesn't have to be Willow or Alder. Any trees or shoots that you find which will meet your needs are fine. You'll be surprised at what you discover once you start searching.

Other woods that we use are:

- Striped Maple
- Ironwood (Hophornbeam)
- Cedar
- Blue Beach
- Yellow Birch
- White Birch

These are trees that are common in our area - you will likely have a different choice to pick from.

Happy Harvesting

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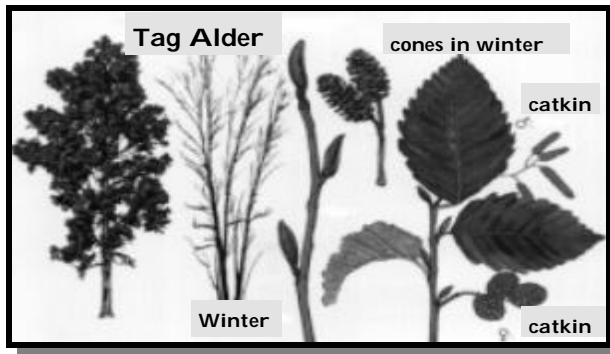
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just the bend of the handle to ensure a nice smooth bend.

Now that the handle is completed and in place, you can go ahead with decorating the two ends of your magazine rack. See figure 6 (b). Since you are working with thinner pieces, it is a good idea to keep your nails as far from the ends as possible, yet still provide proper holding power.

The only thing left to do now, is to check for protruding nails, and then to paint shellac on all exposed ends and breaks in the bark. We recommend a coat of Min Wax Natural Antique Oil applied with a spray mister or a used Windex spray bottle.

This has been the first in what, hopefully, will be a long series of how to articles, and Maggie and I would really appreciate some feedback from our subscribers. If you try this project, let us know if the directions and drawings were accurate and easy to understand. If not,



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